

Formative Assessment Feedback Policy

Classification – *Internal*

MARCH 2026



Introduction

This policy outlines the expectations of formative assessment and feedback at Arden University, and to support the university in providing high-quality education, meeting the requirements of the Office for Students' conditions of registration.

It should be noted that staff, in keeping with good practice in teaching, will provide ongoing feedback throughout their teaching through assessment for learning opportunities. These ongoing opportunities support students in making progress in their acquisition and application of knowledge and skills, and as such supports the advancement of Arden's [Teaching Excellence Standards](#). However, it is important to recognise that this policy is in relation to student work submitted as part of a formal scheduled formative assessment opportunity for feedback.

About this policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with, amongst others:

- QA 26 - Assessment Feedback Policy
- QA 22 - Assessment Volume Equivalences and Format Choice Policy
- Artificial Intelligence guidance

Who is covered by the policy?

This policy applies to all academic staff at Arden University, including those studying/working at an Arden University programme through a collaboration or partnership provider, involved in facilitating or providing formative assessments.

This policy applies to formal formative assessment activities undertaken at Arden.

Definitions

- *Artificial intelligence (AI)*: means the use of machine learning technology, software, automation, and algorithms to perform tasks and make rules or predictions based on existing datasets and instructions.
- *Assessment feedback*: information provided to students to explain the indicative grade and/or progress for their formative assessment.
- *Assessment for learning*: used to recognise and respond to student learning to enhance that learning, usually through in-class learning opportunities.
- *Feedback*: in the context of learning and teaching, is the opportunity for constructive dialogue and reflection about the skills and knowledge that are being demonstrated. At Arden feedback is provided in a number of domains:
 - *Assessment for Learning Feedback* - which is conducted usually during in-class activities,
 - *Formative Assessment Feedback* - which is given to support progress,

- *(Summative) Assessment Feedback* -which is provided on work that contributes to a module/programme outcome and provides a narrative.
- *Formative assessment*: an opportunity to review students' progress, knowledge and/or skills in relation to the module learning outcomes but does not contribute to the final outcome of the module grade.
- *Scaffolding*: is the use of teaching methods to provide temporary support to a learner to acquire greater skills and knowledge.
- *Summative assessment*: formal evaluation of a student's understanding of module learning outcomes.

Policy responsibilities

- Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy complies with internal and external regulatory requirements. The Academic Framework, Regulation and Policy Committee have delegated authority from the Academic Board for the approval and ongoing review of this policy;
- The Head of Assessment has primary and day-to-day responsibility for developing and implementing this policy, monitoring its use and effectiveness, and ongoing review of procedures to ensure they are effective;
- Heads of Departments (HoD) are responsible for the effective implementation of the policy at a local level and ensuring that formative assessment is consistently and appropriately conducted by staff in their department. The HoD has responsibility for ensuring that their staff have access to training opportunities to support them in providing formative feedback;
- Management at all levels are responsible for ensuring those reporting to them understand this policy and how it applies to them and/or students;
- All academic colleagues are responsible for ensuring they understand this policy and how it applies to them and/or students.

Compliance with this policy

All staff and students must ensure that you read, understand and follow this policy.

- If you are a student and unsure about formative feedback for your module, then speak to your Module or Programme Leader;
- If you are a member of staff and unsure about formative feedback for your programme/department then speak with the HoD or delegated responsible person;
 - If you would like to develop your formative feedback strategies then please consult the activities offered through the Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching, and any local context training.

Policy Detail

Principles of Formative Feedback

The principles that underpin this policy are that formative feedback¹:

- helps students to reflect on the strengths of their performance in relation to the assessment criteria and/or learning outcomes, whilst avoiding being inherently evaluative (for summative feedback see [QA 26 Assessment Feedback Policy](#));
- provides students with compassionate and supportive information about what they have done, and steps to further develop their work;
- informs students and staff where misconceptions in skills and knowledge might be and action needed to address those misconceptions;
- provides students with information to enable effective reflection about what could be further developed for them to make progress;
- uses a range of strategies to ensure that student and staff time is effectively utilised, and that the needs of students are considered, this may include: individual and/or group written feedback, group verbal feedback, use of a feedback focus sheet to guide staff with aspects of the assignment that they should focus their time and feedback on;
- signposts students to resources and sources of information and support;
- promotes students to be responsible for their learning, developing reflection to allow them to be independent and resilient, and have the best outcome possible.

Formative Feedback Expectations

Formative assessment may vary depending upon the programme and module; however, it is important that students have consistency in feedback. Through a university-wide effort of using formative assessment and feedback will students be effectively engaged in the process; hence staff must provide at least one opportunity in their module(s) for formative feedback and/or planned assessment for learning feedback.²

Formative assessment feedback should be provided at a point which will be helpful to students for the module they are studying, and future modules. Therefore, formative assessment should take place at least 10 working days prior to summative assessment. Any submissions of formative assessment after the formative deadline, except where that has been an approved reasonable adjustment or extenuating circumstance, will not be provided with individual formative feedback.

Formative assessments should be submitted in a medium that can be accessed by multiple staff, i.e. avoid personal email addresses. To facilitate this iLearn will provide functionality for the submission of formative assessments and allow for formative feedback to be provided.

Formative assessment feedback should be provided at least 5 working days prior to summative assessment. This means there is flexibility in the turn around time of feedback where a formative deadline falls before 10 working days of the summative assessment. Where students have submitted their formative assessment by the given deadline but have not received a reasonable explanation given, should raise the concern with their module leader.

Students usually will only be permitted to submit once to each formative assessment element, this means regardless of whether a student submits work early, they should not usually be permitted to seek feedback on a later version of the same formative assessment.

Note it is NOT expected that staff provide feedback immediately to students, provided that the feedback is given 5 working days prior to the summative deadline. It is important that staff communicate the feedback turn around times to students to manage expectations. Nonetheless, feedback needs to be timely to allow students to act on it, as failure to do so may result in escalation of concerns. Students should consult the [Complaints Policy](#) if they are at risk of being disadvantaged.

Formative assessment feedback should be supportive and actionable to allow students to further develop their work, however, there is a careful balance so that the extent of feedback is not overwhelming. Therefore, it is expected that formative feedback would not normally be more than one side of A4 (roughly 300 words), note that this does not apply to dissertations or capstone projects.

Formative Feedback Content

Students Should have opportunities to apply and reflect on their skills and knowledge in a low-risk format that formative assessment provides. Formative feedback should:

- be appropriate in feedback size compared to the formative assessment size, with at least, two strengths and two areas for development should be identified:
 - for strengths, be positive speaking about the work, knowledge and skills demonstrated, and avoid using third person;
 - for areas for development, be positive and future looking, remember to focus on the work, knowledge or skills related to the learning outcomes and marking criteria;
- make clear and specific recommendations of areas for development, and guidance on how to achieve those, signposting to further resources or support. This might be about asking students to further elaborate upon their work, such

as to demonstrate why they have made a decision, or about making their work more concise;

- use clear and concise language aligned with the marking matrix criteria domains written in a supportive tone, whilst avoiding grade descriptors;
- focus on the ideas and content that the student has conveyed in their formative assessment, as this highlights greater impact on areas for development. This means no more than one comment should be on stylistics and presentation;
- use specific examples in the student's assessment to the criteria in the summative assessment marking matrix and/or module learning outcomes;
- avoid offering a grade/mark on students' work;
- identify how to speak to a member of staff to discuss their feedback further. This is important for those students who need to substantially develop their work, and where there may be more areas for development that would otherwise be over an A4 page of feedback if all were listed;
- concerns about Academic Integrity issues should be flagged to students and signposting to appropriate support, such as to the Academic Skills Team or Student Hub, to help avoid such issues in summative assessment.

Departmental Flexibility

This policy provides flexibility for the decision of how formative assessment will be implemented in departments. However, consideration must be given to what is reasonable for staff to review and the needs of the programme. Hence, departments may take a levelled approach, such as reviewing all of an assignment at Level 4 (first year undergraduate) and then reviewing only up to 10% of an assignment at Level 6 (final year undergraduate).

In determining the formative assessment approach, module leaders should work with the programme lead to decide the extent of the formative assessment and the methods for providing feedback. The HoD has responsibility for ensuring the overall programme approach for formative assessment and feedback is appropriate and meets the expectations of this policy. HoDs may decide for their department to have longer turnaround times for formative feedback, e.g at least 10 working days prior to summative assessment, but not shorter turnaround times for feedback. The HoD may decide it appropriate in developing a stepped approach to the extent of feedback provided at different levels of the programme, but this must be applied consistently and following consultation with the CELT Assessment Team.

Formative Feedback Format

Formative feedback should be provided in a format that provides students the opportunity to engage meaningfully with it, whilst balancing the above minimum

expectations and the workload colleagues have. Therefore, formative feedback should be provided to meet the needs of students, whilst being guided by the above Formative Feedback Principles and Formative Feedback Content to ensure there is consistency across the University.

Whilst it is strongly recommended that formative feedback format utilises a similar approach to that being employed in summative feedback format, time and programme restrictions may mean that this is not always feasible.

Formative feedback format should be designed to meet the needs of the module and students on the programme. It is expected that individual formative feedback may be delivered by one or more of, but not limited to, the following means:

- written from an academic member of staff
- written from peers facilitated by an academic member of staff
- verbal from an academic member of staff (direct or pre-recorded (audio/video))
- verbal from peers facilitated by an academic member of staff (direct or pre-recorded audio/video))

Formative feedback may be provided to a whole class for a formative assessment and may prompt students to engage in self-assessment based on the feedback. Nonetheless, there must be sufficient feedback to allow students to recognise the strengths and areas for further development of their individual work.

It might be that departments decide to opt for a feedback grid to support the signposting for students to help provide clarity. To support colleagues with providing consistent and clear formative assessment information and feedback, appended to this policy are a range of templates that can be used and modified to meet local needs. See templates on the [CELT Assessment SharePoint](#)

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Arden University expects AI to be used ethically and responsibly. Where a student has used AI in their formative assessment this should be considered in context of their course and whether this would be permissible in a summative assessment. Where AI in a summative context would constitute Academic Misconduct, support should be offered by signposting to appropriate information. If it is established that a student has used AI due to uncertainty of approaching the task, signposting to the Academic Skills Team would be useful, or if there is a language barrier signposting to Student Support and/or English Language Hub.

Staff may use AI to support in refining narrative feedback but must not solely rely on AI to generate accurate and personalised narrative feedback. It is the

responsibility of the Reviewer to ensure their feedback fulfils the expectations of this policy.

As the University continues to explore options of AI in assessment, this policy recognises that AI systems may develop to provide formative feedback to students. In this case, AI systems providing formative feedback may be available to students up to the point of summative assessment submission. However, it does not remove the opportunities that staff should provide for students.

Communication and Awareness of this policy

This policy will be communicated to Heads of Schools/Departments, and Academic Directors should ensure all academic colleagues on their campus are given a copy of this policy. This policy will be available to all staff on the SharePoint intranet.

References

- 1 – Nicol, D. (2007). Principles of good assessment and feedback: Theory and practice. From the REAP International Online Conference on Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, 29th-31st May, 2007. Available at <http://ewds.strath.ac.uk/REAP07>
- 2 - Gedye, S. (2010). Formative assessment and feedback: a review. Planet, 23(1), 40–45. Available at <https://doi.org/10.11120/plan.2010.00230040>

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