What is Academic Feedback?

Academic feedback is the practice of giving students information about their performance against a known standard. The information comes from a variety of sources including peers, patients, teachers and examiners. Feedback from assessments almost always includes a grade but may in addition take the form of written or audio comments on a text assignment, ratings against criteria on a marking schedule, discussion with an individual or group after an examination, or a commentary on the Edinburgh Electronic Medical Curriculum (EEMeC). Good teachers make academic feedback an integral part of their teaching. That is to say they routinely let learners know how they are doing, and how to improve their performance in settings such as class discussions, practicals, project work, oral presentations, clinical teaching, ward rounds and surgeries.

What is the purpose of Academic Feedback?

Academic feedback aims to create change in learners. It helps students realize what they know and can do and most importantly how to improve their future performance. Academic feedback can therefore encourage and steer learning and is a vital part of high quality learning and teaching.

At review meetings Directors of Studies and other staff will discuss all relevant academic feedback with students and help them use it when considering priorities for learning and future career direction.
Improving Practice in Academic Feedback

The challenge is to make the most of our current opportunities for academic feedback in teaching sessions and assessment. There are three important aspects to focus on and these form a cycle (adapted from van de Ridder):

**Cycle of Feedback to Improve Performance:**

A. **Information:** must be based on accurate analysis of observed performance or abilities, and shared promptly.

- Clear, focused, practical advice will be given on:
  - What to **Stop**.
  - **How to** Improve – (absolutely essential for valuable feedback)
  - What to **Maintain**.

  (The **SHIM Format** is a useful reminder but the order of comments will vary to suit the situation.)

- Judgements on ability will be based on the standards appropriate for students in that year of the programme.

B. **Reaction:** students need help to interpret, understand and accept the feedback and to implement its implications. This may require discussion.

- Feedback is a collaborative activity, students are encouraged to seek learning opportunities that will provide feedback, collect feedback when available, take time to reflect upon it, find its meaning and put it into practice.

- Staff will encourage students to discuss their feedback with them if they require further explanation.

- Students will appreciate that the aim of these meetings is to improve their performance, not negotiate a better mark.

  **Marks may not be challenged during meetings to discuss feedback.**

C. **Repetition:** learners need timely opportunities to act on the advice given, with further feedback so they can reflect on how successful their own efforts have been to improve their performance, and build on them.

**Standards for specific types of assessment:**

1. **Examination feedback:** there will be feedback on all MCQ examinations, although not necessarily on every question. Feedback may be in one of the following ways:
   - Whole class presentation and discussion.
   - Information on strengths and weaknesses on EEmEC.
   - Profile of individual performance identifying strengths and weaknesses in domains or themes.

2. **Assignments:** Feedback in the **SHIM** format above, and provisional marks, will be returned to students within the following timescales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>WEEKS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>WEEKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yr 1 ICA Essay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SSC2a and 2b</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr1 TwF, HNOP</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>SSC3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SSC4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 2 ICA 1 and 2</td>
<td>3 and 7*</td>
<td>Yrs 3-5 Portfolio Cases</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 2 ICP Studies</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>Yrs 4 and 5 Overview Essays</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes University Holiday Period

3. **Observed in-course clinical tests:** staff will mark mini-CEX or SCEE tests and give feedback against criteria in terms of what to stop, how to improve and what to maintain (SHIM). Students should write this down for later reflection and action.

4. **Team-working, interpersonal skills and other aspects of personal professional development (PPD):** these will be addressed in electronic feedback from peers and tutors in relation to problem-based learning and SSCs; and in end-of-clinical attachment forms and feedback sessions (see below).

5. **Feedback at the end of clinical attachments:**

- All students will have a one-to-one feedback session with a tutor
  - at the end of the following modules:
    - Year 3: Respiratory, Locomotor, Gastroenterology, SSC3.
    - Year 5: Medicine, Surgery, GP, Geriatrics, Peripheral CL&H, Elective (though this is dependent on the host institution).
  - at the end of each theatre session in the Year 5 Anaesthetics module.

All students will have a group feedback session at the end of:

- Year 3 Cardiovascular.
- Year 5 Emergency Medicine.