

19 May 2011

University of Birmingham

**A Clarification to the Codes of Practice on Student Development and Support
in Schools and Taught Programme and Module Assessment**

Purpose of Paper

1. To agree the addition of a clarification to clause 3.2.2 (c) of the Code of Practice on Student Development and Support in Schools and clause 7.1 of the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment relating to the amount of time after which students can have expected to receive feedback on assessed work.

Proposal

2. That the Code of Practice on Student Development and Support in Schools 3.2.2 (c) be changed as follows (additions underlined):

[All students should:]

be informed of the timescale for feedback arrangements. This should be timely (i.e. within four weeks (20 working days) of the submission date of the assessment/piece of work, including periods when the University is not in session, but excluding University closed days) so that they can adjust their patterns of work before subsequent assessment opportunities; Staff on part year contracts who are responsible for marking assessments should comply with the Code of Practice on the deadline for the return of student work. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible in respect of marking work during periods when they are otherwise not contracted to work, such staff should discuss this with their Head of School as soon as possible and in any event at the beginning of each term when they realise that an assessment deadline is unlikely to be met. Where it is not possible for staff on part year contracts to meet a deadline, an agreed date for the return of work should be notified to all affected students when the assessment is set.

~~*This should be timely (within four week of the submission date of the assessment/piece of work) so that they can adjust their patterns of work before subsequent assessment opportunities;*~~

3. That the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment 7.1 be changed as follows (additions underlined, deletions struck-through):

Registered Students should be given timely and relevant feedback on assessments, particularly those undertaken during a module and used to inform the Registered Student's learning (e.g. coursework). In accordance with the Code of Practice for Student Development and Support in Principal Academic Units, Registered Students should be informed of the timescale for feedback arrangements. This should be timely (i.e. within four weeks (20 working days) of the submission date of the assessment/piece of work, including periods when the University is not in session, but excluding University closed days) so that they can adjust their patterns of work before subsequent assessment opportunities; Staff on part year contracts who are responsible for marking assessments should comply with the Code of Practice on the deadline for the return of student work. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible in respect of marking work during periods when they are otherwise not contracted to work, such staff

should discuss this with their Head of School as soon as possible and in any event at the beginning of each term when they realise that an assessment deadline is unlikely to be met. Where it is not possible for staff on part year contracts to meet a deadline, an agreed date for the return of work should be notified to all affected students when the assessment is set.

and this should normally be within four weeks of the submission date of the assignment/piece of work so that patterns of work can be adjusted before subsequent assessment opportunities. Principal academic units may wish to provide this feedback in ways other than by provision of actual marks. Where marks are provided in advance of confirmation by the Board of Examiners, it should be emphasised that these marks remain provisional.

Background

4. The requirement that assessed work normally be returned within a four week period has been in force in the University for some time, however queries have been raised from various areas of the University concerning the interpretation of this clause, namely the College of Arts and Law, who are facing questions as to whether weekends are included, what counts as a 'closed' day, whether particular religious holidays should be taken into account, and how this applies to staff on term-time only contracts.
5. An initial paper on this topic was discussed in the APRC of 03 February 2011 but it was felt that further discussion was required around the issue of staff on term-time only contracts between Legal Services, HR and the Chair. The above proposals were developed as a result of these further discussions.

Arguments to Support Proposal

6. The principle of the above changes were broadly agreed in the APRC of 03 February 2011, but it was felt that the issue of staff on term-time only or part time contracts needed to be considered in greater detail. This paper lays out the result of this discussion.

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