Case Study 2: **Feedback on written examinations**

**Abstract**

Surprisingly, feedback is rarely provided on formal written examinations in HE History. This is partly because traditionally this was not the practice and also because of the pressure of time during the examination period. Yet, setting assessments which have no feedback mechanisms is not good practice and students are left with no guidance about their performance or how to improve. This case study considers a department-wide initiative to introduce feedback on written examinations. The strategy used was to produce a simple template for a cover sheet. This could be used by both students and examiners. Student feedback was brief and focused on ‘ways to improve’. The system has been in place for three years and is commended by external examiners and by the students themselves.

**Key words:** examination feedback, dialogue

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<th><strong>Context</strong></th>
<th><strong>Project rationale (link to pedagogic research)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Subject: History</td>
<td>Providing feedback on examination performance which had hitherto not been given</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level: 2 and 3</td>
<td>Focusing on ways to improve</td>
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<td>Number of students: 50</td>
<td>Manageable staff workload</td>
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<td>Format: (e.g. seminar)</td>
<td>Same form may be used for students, internal and external examiners</td>
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<td>Level 2 Option</td>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>Advanced Option</td>
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<td>The Victorian City</td>
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### Initiative outline

The template was introduced for all examinations in the department of History. The first marker completes the front of the cover sheet with brief comments on each question and 3-4 bullet points on ways in which the students’ performance may be improved. The second marker/external examiner adds comments to the back of the sheet (some of these comments may be communicated to student). The mark is then agreed between examiners. Students attend one-to-one tutorials within 2-3 weeks of the examination to receive feedback from the front cover.

### Implementation advice (including resources)

Standardised template for cover sheet (attached)

### Benefits for teaching and learning

- Students receive feedback on all examinations taken (previously received none)
- Students receive feedback in a timely manner
- Feedback is specific and focuses on ways to improve performance (see attached)
- The procedure is efficient in terms of time for the marker as they only complete one sheet for both students and other examiners
- Students receive feedback in a similar format for all examinations

Comment from an external examiner:

All assessed work is seen by two examiners. The first provides comments and marks, the second responds and agrees the provisional final mark. The expectation is that the second marker will read the submission; in practice, some submissions are virtually blind double-marked. This system was first used last year (2009) and has run this year very smoothly and efficiently. The examiners’ comments were judicious and helpful. The form employed has been adjusted (as suggested last year) so as to allow room for confidential comments and students’ feedback. I am particularly impressed by the quality of the feedback. The assessment process is thus employed very helpfully to make the marking as transparent as possible, assist students’ progression, and address each student’s weaknesses and strengths.
Troubleshooting tips

It works well when introduced at a Departmental level rather than for an individual module. Ways to improve should be as specific as possible and refer to particular questions/aspects of examination performance.
Ways to improve:

- Provide more discussion of the relevant secondary literature.
- Be more specific and examples in your answers.
- Use clear evidence and data to support your arguments.
- Address the question rather than the question that you would answer.

3 Not answered. Important point: the answer is not always focused on the question. There are some

Issues:

- The essay does not focus on the key issues of the literature period or the life of the
  relevant person. The essay does not focus on the key issues of the literature period.
- The essay is not always focused on the question.
- There are some

Comments on Examination:

During the exam marking process, examiners will note that these internally agreed marks may be changed by external examiners.

Provisional Mark:

Tutor: Sean Richardson
Module: Gender, History & Politics
Degree Course: History & Politics
Year of Study: 2
Student No: 02741792

Examining Committee: Overview

Department of History