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 in to 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 *on* and *for* assessment 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 and contemplated 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),
Examination and Disability Guidelines (www.dcu.ie/registry/examinations/index.shtml) ((http://dcu.ie/disability/index.shtml) and Generation 21 dcu.ie/generation21/index.shtml.

Definition:

Assessment in DCU is considered as a mechanism to evaluate the outcome of the process of learning and as a means to develop the knowledge, the skills and the competencies of our students.

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* learning and assessment *for* or *as* learning, which is described below:

Assessment of learning:

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

- Ascertaining a student's learning through valid and reliable judgment of student performance based on transparent criteria[1]
- Evaluating a student's performance in respect to the intended learning outcomes of DCU modules/programmes

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 learners[2]
- Graded in accordance with explicit marking criteria, which are made readily available to students when engaging with the assessment.

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[1] Assessment criteria are statements of expectation of student performance in relation to assessment activities. As such they are means to ensure transparency and fairness in assessment. It should be noted that the term criterion does not imply any specific characteristic, other than its transparency. The level of prescriptiveness and specification may therefore vary according to the requirements of different subject domains.

[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 before, 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 address any performance deficits;
- 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 must be informative, helpful and relevant.
- Feedback must be clear and accessible and where appropriate may be made available using technology.
- Feedback must be honest and realistic but 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 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

  o 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.

- o Staff have the responsibility to: design modules and programmes so that feedback can be provided to, and acted upon, by students; inform students when, where and how feedback is provided; provide feedback that is prompt, informative and helpful within the resources available to them.