

Timely Feedback from Instructors as it Relates to Student Growth in Academic Courses

Purpose. The goal of this statement is to inform the reader of the impact that timely feedback has on student growth and academic decision-making. Students who do not receive regular timely feedback from instructors in an academic course are not able to use growth feedback to improve their skills and are unaware of their true standing in a course. This statement is intended to educate instructors about the importance of timely feedback in academic courses.

Terms. For the purposes of this statement, the following terms are used:

- *Assessment:* Methods or tools that instructors use to evaluate and measure academic readiness, learning progress, skills and abilities, or educational needs.
- *Growth feedback:* Constructive feedback that helps students learn from mistakes during assessment so they may improve their skills.
- *Instructor:* The individual assigned by the College to instruct a specific course.
- *Timely feedback:* Providing feedback to students within two weeks of an assessment.

Background. Student knowledge of their standing in a course is important for making decisions such as significantly changing study or work habits, seeking tutoring, using office hours, or even withdrawing from a course. Students build this understanding through various forms of assessment and feedback from instructors. When this feedback is not regular and timely, it is very difficult for the student to make improvements to future work or even make informed decisions about potential course withdrawal. Further, grades should be accessible to students throughout the semester and not just when final grades are due.

Assessment and Feedback. Using multiple kinds of assessments can provide ongoing feedback to students throughout the semester, letting students know how they are doing with their coursework so that they can make informed decisions about their learning.

1. **Summative assessments** are a measure of students' knowledge and capabilities after instruction has finished across a unit or area of study. These kinds of assessments are usually more formal in their procedures and are often compared to some kind of standard or benchmark. These are usually higher-stakes assessments.
 - a. **Examples:** Unit tests, chapter tests, final exams or projects, culminating exams or projects
2. **Formative assessments** are a measure of students' emerging knowledge and capabilities during the course of instruction. There are two goals of formative assessment: 1) to provide students feedback that they can use on future assignments and 2) to guide the instructor in their next steps for instruction (e.g., reteaching a concept, giving more guidance to students who need it, or moving on with instruction as planned). Formative assessments usually occur more frequently than summative assessments, and they are lower-stakes.
 - a. **Examples:** Embedded questions within texts or lectures, short auto-graded quizzes that provide immediate feedback, observations from student discussions, short responses to texts or lectures, or smaller assignments that occur throughout the semester (e.g., weekly).
3. **Interim (or interval or benchmark) assessments** are assessments that occur at given intervals over the course of the semester as designed by the instructor. They are built-in places where instructors check on students' progress and students can expect to get feedback about whether or not they are on track to do well on larger assignments in class as well as the class overall.
 - a. **Example:** Starfish early semester feedback, mid-term or quarterly grades

Recommendations.

1. Continue giving early semester feedback via Starfish.
2. Provide feedback to students within two weeks of their assignment/exam due dates.
3. Display grades for students access at any time in a platform of the faculty members choosing. For example, the Blackboard gradebook allows faculty to enter grades easily and then the individual student can look in their student gradebook to keep track of their growth.
4. Give additional feedback in Week 10 of each using Starfish, email, or verbally to let students know how they are doing. Week 11 is typically the last week that students can withdraw from a course.

Thank you for considering these issues for timely feedback in academic courses.

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