



Feedback policy of the University of Vienna

Feedback is an integral part of academic practice in research and teaching. With this policy, the University of Vienna highlights the importance of feedback. The principles below aim at enhancing the feedback culture in studies and teaching at the University of Vienna.

Objectives and added value of feedback

Teachers introduce students to the process of giving and taking feedback as academic practice. Feedback gives students responses that support learning. This means it is easier for students to know where they stand and what potential they can unlock. At the same time, students give their teachers important indications of possible ways in which the transfer of knowledge can be developed. This happens beyond the evaluation of the course in question and as part of the feedback process. Feedback helps to promote a communicative culture of teaching and learning.

Feedback, transparent performance requirements and differentiated assessments help students to gear their activities more towards achieving subject-related goals and standards. In this way, they can better assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own performance and take responsibility for their own learning process.

Feedback gives students the opportunity to feel a stronger sense of achievement in their studies and gives them a boost in the development of a more active study behaviour. Motivated students get more enjoyment in the joint learning process and are more willing to thoroughly deal with course contents. This means they can participate more successfully in academic discourse and become part of the subject's learning community.

Principles of feedback

The following principles indicate the aspects of feedback that are considered particularly important in teaching at the University of Vienna. When implementing feedback, attention needs to be paid to practicability and feasibility: depending on the size of the course and on the learning outcomes, different formats are recommended (see examples on the next page).

- 1) Feedback is given in a timely manner and is formulated objectively and in a respectful manner. It is based on the particular tasks and geared towards improvements.
- 2) Each course and examination allows for feedback (e.g. when grading oral examinations or viewing results of written examinations).
- 3) Feedback is closely connected to transparent performance requirements and assessment criteria.
- 4) Feedback is already kept in mind when designing the course/examination. Students are informed about possibilities of feedback and its importance as part of the assessment process (e.g. peer feedback as a performance component) before or at the start of the course.
- 5) In continuous assessment courses, students are given feedback that is geared towards improvement. The greater the students' independent performance, the more room is given for feedback. Form and intensity are also oriented towards the number of participating students.
- 6) For written assignments as part of continuous assessment courses (seminar papers, bachelor's papers), teachers give feedback in any case. For master's theses, the supervisor gives feedback.
- 7) Students actively seek feedback. They deal with feedback, use it for their development in a particular subject and assess their own work and the work of others (as part of peer feedback) based on criteria and guided by teachers.

Examples of feedback design

1) Individual feedback on written work: This feedback from teachers is essential, in particular, when commencing written work (question, components of the written work) and also when completing it. In the beginning, oral feedback is particularly suitable. As the course continues, written feedback can be given, for example, in electronic drafts using the comment function. For students, lists of criteria/assessment schemes (on aspects such as the components and structure of the work, dealing with literature, presentation of the problem, originality, etc.) prove useful. For assessment purposes, points can be added.

2) Peer feedback from students leads students to the academic practice of giving and taking feedback. In this process, students learn to assess the performance of others (and therefore also their own performance) in a more differentiated way. By adding written comments to the work of others, students can learn about the peer review processes in the academic world. Students therefore improve their reasoning skills and practice critical thinking. Guidance by teachers is essential for the success of peer feedback. The format is recommended, in particular, for continuous assessment courses with a larger average number of students. However, it is not supposed to replace assessment by a teacher.

3) Feedback in continuous assessment courses in the laboratory: Feedback to students focuses on increasingly independent work in the laboratory (time planning, using equipment, safety). The requirements regarding record keeping are communicated clearly and in advance, for example in the form of an assessment scheme. Teachers give early feedback on the records so that students can take it into account in subsequent partial achievements.

4) Generic feedback in continuous assessment courses with large groups: Forms of summarised feedback from teachers on the performance of students are suitable here. Teachers comment on the student's performance (e.g. in tests, quizzes) in writing and/or orally. They present anonymous work and ask students for suggestions for improvement. Teachers can take the opportunity to present good answers, but can also point out common mistakes. In addition to generic feedback, peer feedback is suitable for large groups as well (e.g. via Moodle). In standardised tasks, e-learning enables the use of automatic feedback.

5) Feedback in courses supported by e-learning: (Self-)assessments with standardised feedback give students information on their current knowledge. Moreover, structured peer feedback and discussion forums in online learning phases stimulate the learning process. In units where the students are present, teachers give generic feedback on the voluntary performance of the students, respond to open questions for a better understanding and initiate discussions with and among students. Short knowledge questions in the lecture hall (e.g. via a student response system) can help students to better assess their personal learning progress.

6) Feedback on examination results in non-continuous assessment courses and on written module examinations: The feedback on one-off achievements helps students have a better understanding of the performance assessment including criteria and draw conclusions from this for their future learning. The feedback is provided, for example, as part of viewing of examination results or follow-up work on examinations (in the consultation hour). In addition, teachers can provide information on the status of the individual performance in comparison with the performance of the entire group. Elaborated sample solutions make it easier for students to assess their own performance.

7) Feedback on oral performance: Individual oral feedback on examinations saves time and enables direct dialogue between teachers and students. The latter can ask follow-up questions or detailed questions and clarify individual points. In combination with oral feedback from peers and written (peer) feedback, students therefore receive a wider range of feedback. Respectful interaction is an important requirement for the success of oral feedback.