

# Generating consistent feedback using Excel spreadsheets

*Using a semi-automated approach to generate consistent feedback with individual comments*

## The aim

In Sport & Exercise Science, the marking team wanted to speed up the process of providing feedback to students, whilst at the same time improve the consistency of feedback between each marker.

## Benefits

- **Effective management of marking and feedback**
- **Speedier return of feedback to students**
- **Consistent, individualised feedback to students**
- **Increases student satisfaction and engagement with feedback**

## The approach

The marking team used an Excel spreadsheet with automatic functions to speed up the process of providing feedback to students in a consistent way. The Excel spreadsheet was set up as a grid with the marking criteria displayed in the left-hand column and marking bands displayed across the top row. In each cell, a generic feedback comment was entered for each marking criteria against each of the marking bands. During marking, a second sheet within the spreadsheet allowed the marker to enter a mark against each marking criteria, and the comment for that particular grading band was returned automatically. The output produced a personalised feedback sheet for each student, on which individual comments were also provided.

Students submitted their work online to Blackboard. This assisted in managing marking and feedback more effectively. The submissions were downloaded and distributed amongst the markers along with a copy of the spreadsheet. The marking team met for an initial moderation meeting where each member marked and discussed four samples of the students' work to ensure that every marker was marking to the same standards. When all the work had been marked, the feedback sheets were all produced as PDF files using a macro feature of the spreadsheet. The PDF files were returned to students via the Blackboard Grade Centre.

## The outcome

The spreadsheet helped with consistency as all the markers were giving the same feedback, the same comments, and marking strictly to the criteria. Even though automatically generated, students understood how they could use the standard comments to help them improve their work. Initially, students indicated that some of the comments were ambiguous; comments did not make sense to them, comments were not in their language, and there were things that they did not fully understand. As a result, the comments were reviewed and updated.

This method has been used for about ten years. Initially the automatically generated comments were the only feedback the students received on their work; there were no individual comments. Although the students appreciated the speed of the feedback, they missed those individualised comments and wanted to know how they could improve elements of their individual piece of work. Since then, the spreadsheet has been developed to allow the inclusion of individual comments, so specific pointers could be included for the student whose work is being marked to help them improve for the next time.

## Future development

The tutor plans to develop the functionality of the Excel spreadsheet in line with outcomes of the Assessment Journey Programme.

## Profile

**Tutor name:**

Alison Purvis

**Faculty:**

Health & Wellbeing

**Size of cohort:**

Large (70-150 students)

**Technologies used:**

Excel (HWB Feedback Spreadsheet), Online submission via Blackboard, Blackboard Grade Centre

**If you would like your assessment practice captured and shared in a similar case study, please email !  
Assessment Journey Programme**

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## Recommendations

The module leader recommends the following for others considering a similar approach:

- Before starting with the approach get team buy-in
- Set up an initial moderation meeting during which the team can mark and discuss samples of student work to ensure consistency and standardisation of marking
- Check that all generic feedback comments are written in a language that students can fully understand and inform students how they can improve (i.e. they do not just reaffirm the grade)
- Accompany generic feedback statements with individual comments which are written in the context of the students' original work so that they understand what the comment is referring to