

SCREEN AND
FILM SCHOOL

Brighton

Screen & Film School Learning & Teaching Strategy

Reviewed October 2019

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SFS LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY

Introduction

This strategy is in five parts: the first part outlines the strategic aims and overarching policy guiding SFS's approach; the second part (Addendum 1) is the teaching observation policy; the third part (Addendum 2) is the assessment policy; the fourth part (Addendum 3) the current Learning and Teaching Enhancement Plan; and the fifth part (Addendum 4) contains advice to tutors on providing feedback to students on progress and achievement.

Aims:

- SFS commits to providing high quality teaching and support for its students. The Film School aims to address the differentiated needs of individual learners and ensure that all students have equal and fair access to learning resources.
- In line with the QAA UK Quality Code and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), SFS aims to meet the expectations as follows:
 - Articulate and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching and promote a shared understanding of this approach among staff, students and other stakeholders;
 - Ensure that learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes;
 - Ensure that learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship;
 - Everyone involved in learning and teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified supported and developed;
 - Ensure physical, virtual and social learning environments are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use;
 - Ensure that every student is provided with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.

Policy:

- All Learning & Teaching (L&T) strategies adopted by SFS will be flexible, diverse and appropriate to the skills and needs of individual learners.
- All Learning & Teaching strategies will incorporate appropriate learning technologies.
- Regular formative and summative assessment will be used to inform day-to-day Learning and Teaching and future staff development.

The SFS teams are responsible for:

- Ensuring that tutors teach to a defined curriculum and relate lecture material clearly to assessment and module learning outcomes;
- Ensuring that the course and assessment requirements are clear to the students;
- Ensuring that teaching staff are assisted and supported with appropriate training to maximise the potential of their teaching;
- Helping the tutors maintain a professional disciplined and relaxed environment conducive to students in the creative industries reaching their full learning potential.

Pedagogic approaches

SFS encourages teaching staff to adopt innovative and inclusive approaches to academic and vocational pedagogy.

Teaching should aim to make learning visible to both teacher and student and create an environment where there are opportunities to practice the skills being taught (Hattie, 2009). Teachers should also be flexible and open in their approaches, acting as experts in their subject, but also as guides or facilitators and sometimes as co-creators (McWilliam, 2008). We recognise that learning in the creative industries is both formal and informal (Green, 2002) and we seek to draw on what our students learn in class and outside in making the opportunities for learning we provide more effective. SFS also recognises that learning in the creative industries is an iterative and aesthetic process (Finney, 2002) and above all a process of identity formation (Frith, 2004). Finally, that the education should be an experience that is authentic to our students and one that encourages them to be creative and innovative practitioners.

Brief description of Learning & Teaching methods employed:

T&L Method	Description (in SFS terms)
Lecture	Tutor-focused delivery to a class. Exposition on a given subject incl. opportunities for questions and answers.
Discussion	Exchange between students and tutor, or student and student in classroom. Formal consideration of a set subject.
Coursework	Exercises assigned by tutor for completion in or out of class, usually over a short period.
Peer/group learning	Student-directed learning with or without tutor supervision/input. Usually in groups of three to six people.
Group work	Collaborative exercises, writing, or creation by students; supervised or unsupervised and following directions set by the tutor.
Presentations	Student delivery to class and tutor individually or in a group.
Exercises	Tutor-set tasks to a class or group within class time.
Work based learning	Training based on experiential and reflective learning, both within SFS and outside.
Tutorial	One-to-one student/tutor exchange.
Personal reading	Books, web texts and scripts in student's own time; advised by tutor.
Individual practice	Practice organised by the individual (offsite).
Demonstration	Tutor demonstrates a technique, approach, style or exemplar to class. Illustration of material by practical application.
Workshops	Visitor or tutor-led group work session. Interaction and exchange of information among students and visiting participants.
Filming	Filming in a Film School or commercial studio, or on location; alone or collaboratively.
Guest visits	Masterclasses, interviews and workshops from industry professionals.
Industry field trips	Trips away from SFS to film industry organisations.
Screenings	Screened content; critical observation guided by tutor.
Informal learning	Student-centred learning from their own experience.
Reflection	Examining own practice, learning and outcomes.
Planning diaries	Organising production meetings, recces, audition schedules, filming, editing, and production schedules in written form.
Seminar	Small group academic instruction.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. SFS Learning and Teaching is based on the principles of craft and reflection: skills are examined in the context of building proficiency whilst simultaneously examining the relevance and use of the learning. For learning to be effective students must be provided with the opportunity to practice the skills they are learning as they learn them.

Learning & Teaching practice reflects the stages of assessment through the degree-level Courses:

- **At Level 4 UK**

Students are introduced to the methods and skills required for successful Higher Education study, and will begin to develop a self-guided approach to learning. They will also acquire knowledge of the principles and theories associated with their area of study, and be able to present, evaluate and interpret data in order to make sound judgments. Learning and teaching at this level has a practical focus on the development of subject specific skills, with discussion and peer group feedback regularly encouraged.

- **At Level 5 UK**

At this level we build on the foundations laid previously: students are encouraged to take a more critically reflective and self-guided approach to their learning, devising their own essay titles and projects. Students will acquire knowledge and critical understanding, the ability to apply underlying concepts outside of their original context(s) and an understanding of the limitations of knowledge in their field, whilst also developing skills appropriate to future employment. Learning and teaching includes a range of activities such as group work, experiential learning, industry field trips, guest lectures, work-based learning and placements.

- **At Level 6 UK**

Students are required to become effective practitioners, with an in depth understanding of professional standards in their field and display high levels of self-organisation. Students should also demonstrate the ability to guide their own development and be critical and analytical. Students should likewise be able to respond to criticism of their own work positively. Furthermore, students will acquire a detailed understanding of the body of knowledge in their discipline, some of which will be at the forefront of the field. Students will also be able to solve problems: deploying techniques of analysis and enquiry; be able to sustain arguments; and support those arguments through reference to advanced scholarship, in their discipline. Learning and teaching offered by tutors therefore, leans towards tutorial assistance, seminars, reflection, and formative feedback.

The Curriculum

The BA (Hons) Film Production builds on the strengths of the Film School's key area of focus, namely industrial production (as opposed to art practice in moving image) and the expertise of our team of lecturers, all of whom are professional practitioners in various film and broadcast capacities.

The curriculum will provide students with an industry relevant offering that includes a critical understanding of applied film theory, with current industry insight and practice in film production, and the creative and technical skills to function effectively in film, television, and associated sectors.

SFS has developed some bespoke approaches to Film Production teaching and these have been built into the SFS delivery model. These approaches support the learning outcomes of the programmes in a variety of ways.

The Teaching & Learning on the BA (Hons) Film Production has been developed in relation to QAA subject benchmarks for communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies, and in line with SEEC level descriptors. The academic and assessment structure will meet the University of Brighton's general Examination and Assessment Regulations for taught courses (GEAR).

Teaching and Learning

Parallel to its robust student academic support structure Screen & Film School has embedded within the BA (Hons) Film Production curriculum various teaching and learning strategies focusing strongly on promoting equality and inclusivity.

The use of variable resource materials, pedagogy and optional assessment outcomes at each level of study are reflective of differing learning styles amongst the SFS student body. Within module specifications, , recommended reading allocations have been expanded to include audio-visual resources to support and encourage participation in visual learning. Additionally, within lectures students may receive paper handouts, all printed on off-white 80gsm matte paper to avoid ostracizing dyslexic students.

Any teaching materials used within lectures are uploaded to Student Central, either prior to the lecture or after its delivery. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Slideshows
- Presentation notes
- Presentation handouts
- Recommended learning resource lists
- Links to content, articles or further resources referenced or utilised

In addition to this student are able, with the presenting tutor's permission, to record segments of their lectures for their reference and note taking at a later stage.

Varied choices of submission format are available at each level of study. Details of these variations can be found in the Module Specifications, an example of which might be a visual essay alternative to a written essay.

Assessments across all levels are wide ranging and include, but are not limited to:

- Observed practical work
- Presentations
- Portfolio work
- Visual essays
- Written essays
- Verbal critical reflection
- Finished Films

The **learning environment** is absolutely integral to the level of 'student buy in' to their educational experience and their success on the programme. Students will spend their time at SFS as 'people within the Film & Broadcast Industry. Our industry facilities and top end equipment ensures students have access to industry standards resources, and a real-life production house environment to develop their skills.

At SFS we are on a constant mission to provide our students with the most up to date specialist camera and lighting equipment, on which we instruct and teach. Our students are able to develop their skills on a wide array of equipment, covering a range of digital and film cameras, lighting rigs and camera and lighting grip.

One-to-One Tutorial Time

Students are entitled to tutorial time with any tutors on the roster. Also, they have the option of arranging tutorials with the Head of Year, Module Leaders, and members of the Student Services team.

ADDENDUM 1: TEACHING OBSERVATION POLICY

Overview

The purpose of the Teaching Observation Policy is to clearly identify the way that teaching observations are used and managed at SFS. As an organisation, SFS places very high value on the quality of learning and teaching within the Film School and utilises both management and peer observation of teaching in order to monitor and report and standards, provide opportunities for feedback and mentoring, and share good practice. Our aim is to develop a culture of critical self-reflection that is effectively supported by peer feedback. There are written criteria and feedback forms for all observations.

The Policy

The primary objectives of teaching observations are as follows – to:

- Develop new teachers as pedagogical professionals in line with sector expectations;
- Ensure that experienced teachers are fully supported in their classroom practice and their professional development;
- Maintain appropriate professional standards in line with the UKPSF, and ensure and enhance the quality of the learning experience;
- Foster dynamic approaches to learning and teaching that are: student centred; holistic; creative, and innovative;
- Acknowledge the variety and quality of learning, teaching and assessment practice.

Implementation

Responsibility for implementing these objectives is held by SFS's Academic Board.

Operation

Operation of the observation scheme is the responsibility of Heads of Education and College Principal.

Training

Staff who are acting, as observers must undertake training and regular refresher sessions to ensure that they are up to date with the current scheme. Staff new to observation will be required to co-observe until they are confident to work autonomously.

Management observations

All SFS teaching staff will have at least one formal observation in each academic year. These observations will be undertaken by established staff who are trained and experienced in observations and the results of these observations will feed into annual appraisal (where staff are subject to annual appraisal and where they are not into meetings with their line manager) and into termly teaching observation reports.

Peer observations

All learning and teaching support staff are encouraged to observe their peers, as and when they wish to, and staff at all levels may drop in to observe teaching. This may be purely informal with only verbal feedback or more formal providing written feedback and comments designed to provide support in professional personal development.

How observation data is generated and used

SFS regards evidence-based decision making as crucial in monitoring and enhancing learning and teaching. Therefore, data from formal management observations is fed into termly reports for AB, this data is anonymised and the reports focus on the overall themes for the Film School (compared to previous years) and analysis of strengths and good practice to be shared alongside areas that need further development. These reports feed back into our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Plan (LTEP) and into the annual Film School Staff Development Plan (SDP). The termly reports are also combined into an annual Learning and Teaching Enhancement Report (LTER) by the Head of Education reporting to AB. Peer observation data is not collected and remains confidential, although themes emerging from peer observation may be included in reporting.

ADDENDUM 2: SFS ASSESSMENT POLICY

There are three broad purposes to assessment:

1. To allow a student to proceed to the next stage of a courses or to graduate
 2. To classify the performance of a student
 3. To improve student learning (*assessment for learning* rather than *of learning*)
- Assessment should be valid, reliable and consistent;
 - Information about assessment should be explicit, accessible and transparent, and where possible assessment should be inclusive and equitable;
 - Assessment should also be integral to course design and relate directly to course aims and learning outcomes;
 - The amount of assessment should be manageable, and assessment should be carried out using both formative and summative methods;
 - Feedback on assessment should be developmental, and staff involved in assessing students must be trained to an appropriate level.

Principles of SFS's assessment policy:

- To ensure that fair assessment is integrated with a dynamic student-focused learning and teaching process;
- To recognise that not all useful learning can be objectively measured and to value the place of formal and informal learning in student learning and achievement;
- To ensure that there is an emphasis on assessment for learning that reflects professional practice and includes self-assessment, peer assessment and work-based assessment;
- To ensure that there is an effective balance of formative and summative assessment in course design and delivery;
- To promote and enhance student learning by providing the student with continuous, motivating and constructive developmental feedback, which helps the student improve their performance and achievement;
- To utilise technology to ensure quick and effective feedback when appropriate;
- To evaluate the student's knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills, with an emphasis on problem-solving, critical thinking and performing in professional contexts and settings;
- To ensure that a mark or grade consistently allows a student's performance to be established;
- To publicise and use clear assessment criteria and marking schemes to ensure that marking is carried out fairly and consistently.

- To enable the wider public, including employers, to be sure that the student has attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the UK Quality Code and our awarding institution;
- To ensure that the standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is properly judged against this;
- To ensure that assessment is clear, legitimate, relevant and consistent;

To enable students to understand the assessment process and develop skills of self-evaluation and professional judgement, and the ability to articulate and express what they have learnt to potential employers;

- To ensure that assessment is conducted with attention, integrity and with due regard for security;
- Module and course design teams should also bear in mind the practicality and affordability of assessment methods, particularly as cohorts grow in size.

The principles of SFS's policy are achieved through:

- Providing adequate opportunity for students to apply formative feedback (from staff or peers) to improve their performance in further assessments;
- Ensuring that feedback is legible and clear;
- Providing appropriate and timely feedback to students on assessed work (including on examinations) in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement but does not increase the burden of assessment, and relates to clear criteria;
- Where possible, co-ordinating assessment deadlines, including resits, to avoid clashes and excessive assessment burdens for students and staff, thus ensuring appropriate frequency and regularity;
- Ensuring that the amount and timing of assessment enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- Evaluating the extent to which assessment tasks and associated criteria are effective in measuring student achievement of the intended learning outcomes of modules and courses;
- Designing assessments that provide adequate opportunity for students to undertake assessment of work that is demonstrably their own (designing out misconduct where possible);
- Promoting diversity of assessment practice and requiring and enabling students to demonstrate their capabilities and achievements within each module or course;

- Encouraging the development of feedback that is flexible and suited to students' needs;
- Encouraging students to adopt good academic conduct regarding assessments and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities.

Glossary

Assessment criteria: These are based on the intended learning outcomes for the work being assessed, the knowledge, understanding and skills markers that SFS would expect a student to display in the assessment task and which must be utilised in marking the work.

Marking schemes: These provide clear statements on the quality and defining characteristics of work submitted for assessment against marking bands and are used by markers to guide marking decisions. SFS utilises both generic course-based marking schemes and assessment-specific ones that work with assessment criteria to guide students and markers.

Authentic assessment: This involves designing credible tasks that require students to utilise prior knowledge, recent learning and relevant skills to tackle complex 'real world' problems (Di Martino 2007). Authentic assessment can play an important role in higher education courses that seek to equip students with the transferable skills that employers increasingly demand of graduates. Although it formed a focus for discussion among educational professionals throughout the 1990s, the adoption of 'authentic assessment' approaches in HE remains rather patchy (Herrington & Herrington 2006), not least because of the many challenges it presents to the designers of assessment tasks (Wiggins 1996). Foremost among these is how to ensure 'fidelity to the real world ways in which knowledge is used in the discipline or field of study' (MacLellan 2004: 21). There are some excellent documented examples of authentic assessment practice in laboratory-based sciences (Bailey 2005), psychology (MacAndrew & Edwards 2002) teacher education (Moss & Godhino 2005) and business studies (Southern & Barr 2002). There may well be others. Nobody is suggesting that this approach should dominate, but it ought to be part of a diverse, innovative and 'employment-focused' SFS assessment regime.

Diagnostic assessment: This is used to show a learner's preparedness for a module or course and identifies, for the learner and the teacher, any strengths and potential gaps in knowledge, understanding and skills expected at the start of the course, or other possible problems. Particular strengths may lead to a formal consideration of accreditation of prior learning. Diagnostic assessment may also be used as part of formative assessment, allowing teaching staff to identify the gap between current ability and desired levels of performance.

Formative assessment:¹ This has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.

¹ UK Quality Code Chapter B6

Black and Wiliam (2009) suggest the following types of activity as examples of formative assessment:

- Sharing success criteria with learners
- Classroom questioning
- Comment-only marking
- Peer and self-assessment
- Formative use of summative tests

This list is far from exhaustive but provides a starting point to consider the use of formative approaches. There is a great deal of debate over the definitions of formative and summative (Taras 2005, 2008; Black & Wiliam 1998, 2006, 2009). However, for our purposes we will accept that assessment designed to provide developmental feedback from tutors or peers (and which may also provide feedback to tutors from students) as its primary goal is in essence formative.

Summative assessment:¹ This is used to indicate how far a learner has succeeded in meeting the assessment criteria which is used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course.

Synoptic assessment: This is an assessment that encourages students to combine elements of their learning from different parts of a course and to show their accumulated knowledge and understanding of a topic or subject area.

Assessment methods

Type
Indicative – summative
Tutor-marked unseen examinations under controlled conditions.
Tutor-marked open-book examinations under controlled conditions.
Tutor-marked practical performance, aural and sight-reading examinations under controlled conditions.
Tutor-marked practical competency tests.
Tutor-marked group assignments including projects, reports and portfolios.
Tutor-marked group assignments including case studies, problem-solving exercises, design tasks, audio-visual artefacts.
Tutor-marked assignments including learning or practice diaries and logs, mapping exercises, notebooks, websites and promo packs.
Tutor-marked group assignments including presentations, pitches and artefacts.
Tutor-marked assignments including projects, dissertations, portfolios, research reports, business reports, work-based learning portfolios, essays and reflective essays, marketing plans, compositions, arrangements, transcriptions and audio-visual artefacts.
Tutor-marked individual assignments including case studies, problem-solving exercises, design tasks, fieldwork.
Tutor-marked individual assignments including learning logs, diaries, mapping exercises, notebooks.
Tutor-marked individual assignments including presentations and viva voces.
Tutor-marked synoptic examinations, projects, portfolios and dissertations.
Multiple choice tests.

Indicative – formative
Negotiated learning contracts.
Peer assessment (of performances, compositions, artefacts, presentations and draft written work).
Self-assessment (of performances, compositions, artefacts, presentations and draft written work).
Classroom questioning.
Sharing success criteria with learners.
Work-based assessment.
Comment-only marking.
Placement assessment.
Simulation exercises.
Multiple choice questionnaires via the VLE (automated feedback and multiple attempts allowed).

ADDENDUM 3: SCREEN & FILM SCHOOL LEARNING & TEACHING ENHANCEMENT PLAN 2017-2020

Introduction

SFS commits to providing high quality teaching and support for its students. The Film School aims, via its learning and teaching strategy to address the differentiated needs of individual learners and ensure that all students have equal and fair access to learning resources.

In line with the QAA UK Quality Code and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), SFS aims to meet the expectations as follows:

- Articulate and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching and promote a shared understanding of this approach among staff, students and other stakeholders;
- Ensure that learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes;
- Ensure that learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship;
- Everyone involved in learning and teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified supported and developed;
- Ensure physical, virtual and social learning environments are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use;
- Ensure that every student is provided with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.

The Learning, Teaching & Enhancement Plan (LTEP) sets out the direction for successfully supporting achievement of the above strategic aims of SFS through thoughtful engagement with on-going, iterative cycles of activity and reflection structured as follows:

- Identifying a small number of key development areas for us to focus on, allowing for sustained attention and progress;
- Setting clear goals for improvements in the identified areas, including both output ('what will we do?') and outcome ('what should this achieve?')
- Designing and carrying out activities to achieve those goals, with clear lines of responsibility and report, via group-wide staff development initiatives, and via individual Film School Enhancement Action Plans (FSEAPs)
- Taking an evidence-based approach to monitoring and evaluating our progress towards achieving our goals
- Reporting on the impact of project work with a view to establishing systematic approaches to enhancing learning and teaching for use in SFS

Goals (2017-2020)

The learning, teaching and enhancement plan sets out four primary goals which identify the key areas for the Film School, to address as appropriate. The goals set forth are for the period 2017-2020, and are agreed by members of AB, who hold responsibility for oversight of this strategic plan.

1. To develop approaches to Assessment and Feedback (**output**) to improve student achievement and progression (**outcome**).
2. To support students in taking effective and self-aware approaches to development of academic, practical, cognitive and personal skills throughout their studies (**output**) to improve student achievement and progression, and ensure that SFS students possess graduate attributes which higher education aims to provide (**outcome**).
3. To make effective use of appropriate technology to enhance learning both inside and outside of the classroom (**output**) to ensure that student learning environments are appropriately flexible, and that learning opportunities support self-directed, formal and informal learning in an integrated manner (**outcome**).
4. To establish and maintain active, student-centred learning environments which prioritise visible learning (**output**) to improve student achievement, attendance, retention and progression (**outcome**).

Should we feel that we have successfully achieved these goals before the end of the academic year 2019/20, we will begin work on our next set of priorities. Similarly, if we feel that further focus is required in these areas at the end of academic year 2019/20, we will seek to extend these goals as necessary.

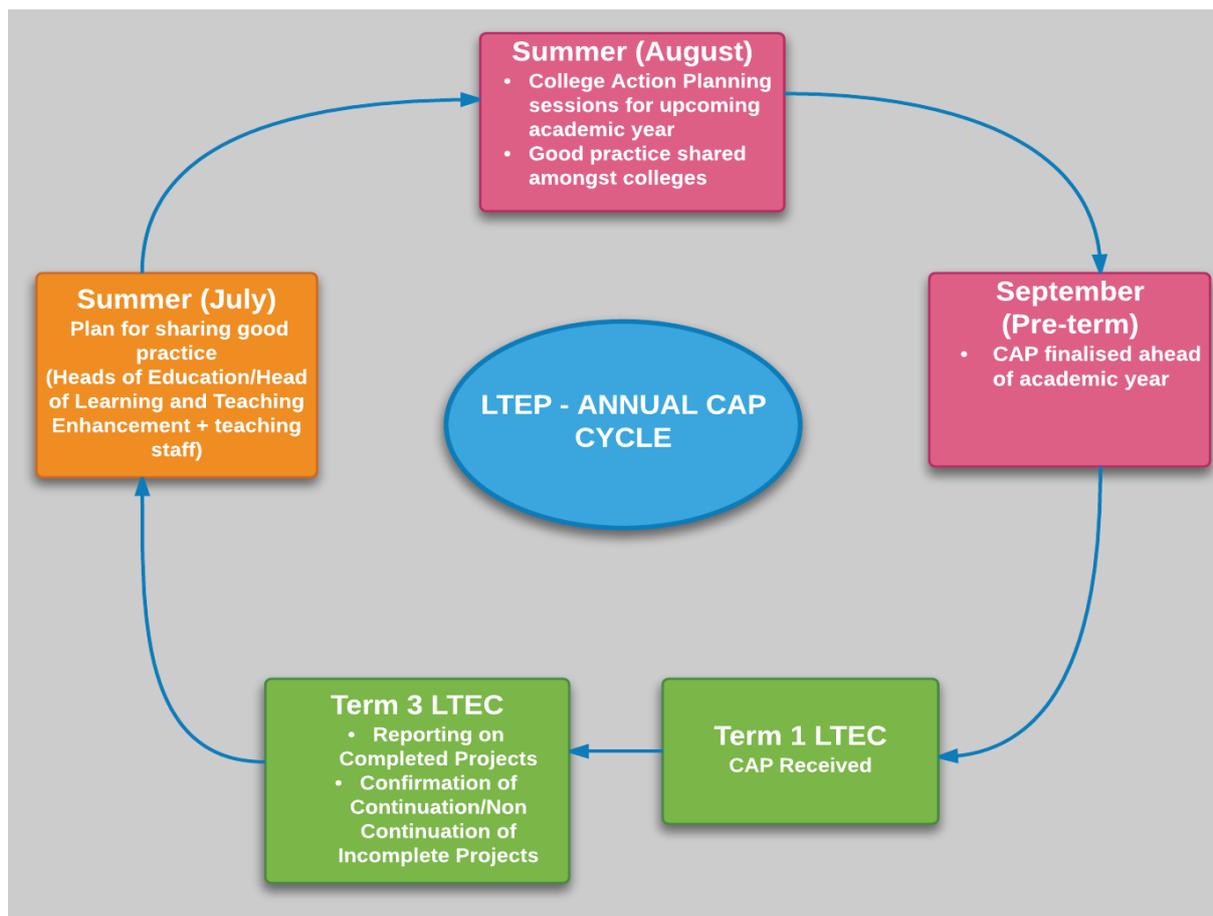
Responses to the LTEP are overseen by AB.

- SFS will primarily address the LTEP via a Film School Enhancement Action Plan (FSEAP), to allow the Film School to undertake project work in line with needs identified, and resources available locally.
- Similarly, staff development planning and actions taken by ADQA and overseen by AB will also respond directly to the LTEP goals.

ADDENDUM 4: ANNUAL FILM SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT ACTION PLAN

The cycle outlined below is provided to provide an overview of the steps for planning, execution and reporting of the actions taken by the Film School to address the goals of the learning and teaching enhancement plan.

The cycle is intended to provide clear milestones which fit in with the academic committee cycle to facilitate effective action planning. Heads of Education and their teams will be supported in generating ideas and refining their plans.



ADDENDUM 5: PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS ON THEIR PROGRESS & ACHIEVEMENT

Why give feedback?

Learning is an active process. To learn, we need to plan what we're going to do; attempt to do it; and then receive feedback on our work. We then use this feedback to improve the work we have just done, or more often in education, to ensure that the next work we do embraces what we have learned.

Feedback also affects how we feel about our work, and inevitably also about ourselves; feedback thus also affects student motivation.

Students often learn like this, and the feedback remains essential. They may even snooze through the odd few minutes of a lecture or seminar, but they will read, pore over, analyse, debate, argue with, and quite possibly treasure feedback.

Especially if the feedback is written to be useful.

Giving good feedback is a skill, which can be learned and honed. This section on giving feedback should help you to give feedback, which merits such intense attention from your students.

Giving Good Feedback will help you to:

- React positively to good things in students' work;
- Make helpful suggestions on ways in which their work could have been improved;
- Correct misapprehensions revealed in their work;
- Make suggestions for how they can change their approach in the future;
- Do this in a way which respects the individuality and worth of each student;
- Do this in a way which makes good and efficient use of your time;
- And don't forget -

Student work contains lots of feedback for the teacher on their teaching.

The feedback sandwich

Not surprisingly, the Open University has done a lot of work on giving useful feedback to students. (By 'useful' here we mean feedback meets the needs of the learners and the obligations of the module and the tutor.) The Open University recommends the feedback sandwich.

First, give them the good news.

They need to know what they've done right, or well. They need to know this so that they'll keep on doing it right or well, and also because it will make them feel appropriately good about themselves and their work, which in itself aids learning as well as feeling good.

They also need to know why it was right or good. Learners sometimes do well by accident - so tell them why it was right or good, in what respects it was right or good.

Good news needs to be:

Clear - Don't beat about the bush. If you think it was 'great' or 'excellent' or 'admirable' or 'very stimulating', then say so. Have the courage of your convictions. (Don't worry about using clichés!)

Specific - Words like 'great' or 'excellent' carry a strong emotional message, but when the emotional buzz fades, the intellectual hunger remains. As we suggested above, say what, exactly what, was good and say why it was good.

Honest - As well as truthful, honest good news clearly distinguishes between fact and judgement. A numerical answer is 'right'; this is a fact. A design was undertaken 'rigorously'; this is an opinion, though hopefully based on clear criteria for 'rigour'. An argument was 'original'; a fact, at any rate relative to your own current knowledge. An argument was 'elegant'; an opinion, or at any rate a judgement. Be clear what the nature of your good news is.

Next, give them bad news - constructively! - And tell them why it is bad and what to do about it

They also need to know what they've done wrong, or poorly, or performed in some other way which is inappropriate within the subject. And, immediately and always, they need to know in what respects it was wrong or poor or inappropriate, and they need suggestions on ways in which it could have been correct or better.

In primarily numerical or scientific disciplines, where some at least of the answers to some of the questions can be right or wrong, reasons for giving prompt and reasoned feedback on wrong answers include:

- So that the learner won't repeat the specific error;
- So that they can identify the misunderstanding which led to the error;
- So that they can develop a new and correct understanding.

In disciplines where answers are more likely to be considered good or bad rather than primarily right or wrong, reasons for giving this kind of feedback on poor answers include:

- To help them appreciate why their approach or answer was inappropriate;
- To help the learner see the preferred approach;

Bad news needs to be:

Specific Make it clear to what you are reacting - which word, which idea, which equation, which stylistic feature. Make it clear in what respects the work is wrong, inappropriate, whatever it is.

Constructive Suggest how the work could have been made accurate, good, conforming to the paradigm of the subject, whatever. Suggest sources of information and guidance. Give them a handle, encouragement, whatever seems right.

Kind Specific is kind. Constructive is kind. "Poor" scribbled at the bottom is cruel.

Honest (See above under 'good news').

Finally, end on a high note of encouragement.

Round off your feedback with a high note and encouragement. "You really seem to be getting to grips with this", "Your analytic skills are improving steadily", "You're making good use of evidence". Say whatever you can that's encouraging and truthful. There's usually something that meets these two criteria.

Giving feedback more efficiently

Students often greatly value useful feedback on their work. Feedback is individual attention, an individual response. Your carefully considered comments on their work, your suggestions on how they could have tackled the work differently, your suggestions for a particular piece of further reading which casts important new light on the topic - all these will be very well received.

The trouble is, you probably don't have an hour or more to spend giving feedback to each student on their work. How can you make sure the students get quality feedback on their work without you staying up all night providing it? There are several ways:

Give feedback in terms of explicit criteria

In short, the idea is to say in advance what will be the characteristics of a good piece of work for this assignment. Some of these criteria may be universal: 'the right number of words', 'clearly presented'. Others will be more specific: 'each step clearly described and explained'; 'appropriate use of varied and novel sources'; 'calculations accurate'; 'imaginative and empathic account'

Only give feedback on one aspect of their work each time

Say you require three sets of work from each student during the module. For example, in the first set of feedback you could concentrate all your feedback on the factual accuracy and the content of their work. On the second you could focus on the quality of argument and reasoning. In the third, on presentation and referencing. Choose your own aspects.

Give audio or audio-visual feedback

Record your immediate reactions onto a cassette/digital media or iPod as you read through their work, not a carefully considered response after you've finished reading. This gives them feedback quickly, personally, directly, and cheaply.

Use attachment sheets

List the ten or twenty (or more) comments, corrections, observations that, you're most likely to make in giving feedback; in general or on this work. Write them up as a list with space for ticks, or as a numbered list. Add space at the top for the student's name, module, and assignment name.

Print, as many copies as there are pieces of work to assess. Then you can 'give feedback by numbers'! On the list, tick the comments, which apply to the piece of work you're marking. Or, a bit more sophisticated, place the number of the comment alongside where it applies in the student's work.

This gets individual feedback to each student. It saves you the need to write out the same comments

lots of times. It leaves you some time to make individual comments on errors or strokes of brilliance, which aren't on your pre-printed list.

Conclusion

These suggestions will help you give useful feedback to students, and to do so efficiently.

A few more points to remember and act on:

1. Your negative comments have a more powerful impact on students than do your positive ones. Go easy on the negatives; use them where appropriate, but always back them up with suggestions on how to do better next time
2. Students are very interested in marks and grades. On un-graded work, they may take more interest in your feedback if you tell them what grade it would have got, and why, and what they could have done to get a higher grade
3. Protect your own time. Note how long the first set of feedback you give takes. Use some of the methods suggested here to make your feedback giving more efficient. Keep noting how long you spend on feedback
4. Ask your students how useful they find your feedback, and what you could do to make it more useful to them. They'll probably be happy to tell you!