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Feedback on Written and Oral Examinations

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Besides providing formative feedback in courses with continuous assessment, teachers can also give feedback that goes beyond the grade to students on their **summative final examinations in courses with non-continuous assessment**. Exams are useful to students, as they receive confirmation of their accomplishments and feedback on their proficiency levels. Exams help to guide student learning^[1] and thus constitute an important element of the teaching and learning process. Differentiated and nuanced feedback enables students to understand better how their performances were assessed, as well as the criteria applied, and allows them to draw conclusions for their future learning activities. Exams and exam performances also provide feedback to teachers. Based on exam performances, teachers learn how well students understand the course topics, and can adapt their teaching accordingly.^[2]

1. Feedback on written examinations

1.1. Feedback during examination reviews

Constructive feedback on written exams (including multiple-choice exams) that goes beyond the grade is often provided during **exam reviews or exam follow-ups** (during office hours). Students have a **right to view and copy** their examination protocols and/or examination sheets. However, multiple-choice questions including the possible answers are excluded from this right.^[3]

The exam review should enable students to gain a nuanced understanding of their performances and the evaluation criteria. It should help students realise their strengths and weaknesses in order to improve future examination performances.^[4] **Model solutions and evaluation criteria**, developed to assess the answers of the respective exam question, are helpful. Model solutions allow students to see the correct answers and thus better evaluate their own performances. Seeing correct answers constitutes a more effective feedback than just receiving a list of incorrect answers.^[5]

For teachers, the use of model solutions and evaluation criteria can contribute to a more efficient and transparent approach to examination reviews. Moreover, model solutions and evaluation criteria established before the exam provide useful supporting arguments in cases of student objections to the grade they received. Furthermore, teachers can use feedback to provide students with advice that goes beyond the course (regarding further study paths, or professional issues). The exam review can also be used to provide students with information on their individual performances compared to the overall group.

1.2. Summarised feedback

Nuanced feedback in addition to the grade is beneficial to students **even if they are unable to attend exam reviews**. Providing **the percentages or the number of points achieved** in combination with the **grading system** helps students to evaluate their own performances better ("How close am I to a higher or lower grade?"). This makes more transparent the area below the points or percentage necessary for passing, which is usually difficult for students to understand ("To what degree was my grade 'insufficient'?", "How close did I get to a passing grade?"). Since task-based, improvement-oriented, and timely feedback is especially beneficial to student learning, assigning a poor grade without providing any further information is less than ideal.^[6]

Collective feedback on a generic level is another option. Examples of this type of feedback are: sharing "typical errors" with students; or individual exam questions with model solutions and assessment schemes, as well as further explanations in the Moodle course.

The online exam review for **multiple-choice exams** using Offline Quizzes on Moodle (<https://www.academic-moodle-cooperation.org/en/documentation/cheat-sheets-en/#c576147>) constitutes a **special case of feedback**. Moodle offers the option of an **automatic online exam review** for students. Teachers may decide on what aspects of the exam they wish to provide different levels of feedback. The options range from the number of points achieved to the entire individual exam including the correct answers.

Nuanced online feedback on exam performances can have a motivating effect on students and foster student learning. Teachers can benefit as well. At times, it can help **reduce the time teachers spend on exam reviews**, since many students receive the relevant information online without needing to attend an exam review session.

2. Feedback on oral examinations

Since teachers are required to announce the results of oral exams immediately after exams, they can provide the grades, as well as appropriate feedback. Individual feedback immediately after oral exams saves time and facilitates a dialogue between teachers and students. Students may ask further or in-depth questions and clarify specific points. In this situation, **model solutions and evaluation criteria** established before the exam, which are typically less detailed than for written exams, are very helpful.

In case a student **fails** an oral exam, teachers are required to explain the reasons for the negative assessment and, upon request, provide the explanation in writing.^[7] Teachers may combine these explanations with constructive feedback, which is often very helpful for students. **Respectful, positive interaction, preferably in an environment free from fear**, constitutes an important precondition for successful oral feedback directly after an exam, an exam review, or exam follow-up. The imbalance of power on a professional level between teacher and student is usually unavoidable. However, when teachers strive to counterbalance this power differential on the interpersonal level, it helps students be more receptive of feedback.^[8]

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[8] Walzik, *Kompetenzorientiert prüfen* [2].

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