# CODES OF PRACTICE

# ON

# STUDENT FEEDBACK

**Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council**
**University Grants Commission**
**Sri Lanka**

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# FOREWORD

The purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide a reference point for all universities, covering the main aspects of student feedback. The Code reflects consensus amongst universities and other groups on the key elements of good practice, which support the student learning experience.

The main principles identified in the Code of Practice are:

- A clear definition of responsibilities.

- Consistent application of policies and practices that are underpinned by principles of fairness and equality of opportunity.

- The availability of clear accessible information.

- The competence of staff.

- Monitoring and review of policy, procedures and practices.

- Use of the Code of Practice in audit and review.

The Code may be added to over time, to reflect national developments as well as changes in universities. Individual universities are expected to use the Code to guide its own developing practice and reflect their own particular context and requirements.


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May 2010.

# CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT FEEDBACK

## Structure of the Code

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more details are required.

## Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes.

# INTRODUCTION

Feedback procedures are used to inform both the teacher and the learner whether an instructional response (by the teacher) or the learning response (by the student) is right or wrong.

While many staff already collect student feedback at the end of semester using questionnaires and student group interviews, it is usually collected too late to allow staff to respond by implementing changes to improve the teaching of the students offering the feedback.

Staff who would like to be able to monitor their teaching during the semester in order to act immediately to improve their teaching might find collection of student feedback during the semester a useful strategy. As with all aspects of feedback and evaluation of teaching, it is useful to draw upon a range of different yet complementary sources of data.

While formal feedback strategies can be adapted to collect feedback during the semester, there are a range of strategies suitable for gathering informal feedback from students. Perhaps the most obvious way is to ask the students questions directly. If classes are small and interactive and there is mutual trust and respect on the part of the students and teachers, then posing questions directly to a class may be feasible. However, there is no scope for anonymity of student responses and some students may feel uncomfortable voicing less popular opinions in such a public manner. There are various strategies which have been developed to

address these issues yet still permit quick and easy collection of feedback from students.

## A. General Principles

1. The term 'student feedback' is used in this Code of Practice to denote direct feedback obtained from students on individual teaching practices, course organization and content, and the general teaching and learning environment.

2. The broad means of obtaining direct student feedback at departmental level include
   - Staff/student committee
   - Questionnaires
   - Use of the personal tutor system
   - Student forums or similar events
   - Informal feedback

3. Indirect feedback, such as that available from analysis of examination answers and marks, statistical information, external examiners, graduates and employers, is not covered in these guidelines.

4. The principles underlying the recommended procedures are that:
   - student feedback should occur and be seen to occur,
   - they should have outcomes which are recorded and fed back to students.

5. Feedback processes should be systematic, rigorous and respectful of the rights of students and staff and incorporate strategies to maximise student participation.

## B. Institutional By-Laws and Regulations

6. It is suggested that the following areas should be covered in institutional by-laws and regulations and standing orders, as appropriate.

   - Appointment of a University- or Faculty-level committee to monitor and improve the quality of the student learning experience through the collection, use and reporting of student feedback on the teaching and learning environment. This Committee may be the same as, or separate

from, the University's / Faculty's Internal Quality Assurance Unit.

- A policy that all students should be given an opportunity, whenever possible, to provide feedback.

- Link between student feedback and development of institutional improvement plans

- Provision of data from student feedback, that assists staff in improving professional practice and the scholarship of teaching

- Provision of data that informs the recognition and reward of good teaching.

## C. Specific Guidance

7. The institution should provide information to students regarding the purpose and outcomes of student feedback over time, including actions taken to address concerns raised in student feedback.

8. The institution should make provision for facilities that enable the systematic collection and analysis of student feedback.

9. Students should be encouraged to participate in departmental decision-making processes, through membership of University, faculty and departmental committees.

10. It is recommended that whenever possible, Departments establish staff/student liaison committees for obtaining student feedback. Students may be co-opted to departmental committees to enable balanced discussion and follow-up of particular recommendations. It is important to ensure that in staff/student forums such as departmental committees, students are not outnumbered by staff.

11. Staff/student committees should include both undergraduate and postgraduate representatives.

12. It is also recommended that minutes of such meetings be taken and published on departmental notice-boards and web sites where appropriate. Matters rose at meetings of staff/student committees which relate specifically to aspects of teaching and learning should be reported on to the appropriate departmental and/or faculty committee.

## Feedback through Questionnaires

13. The University should adopt a policy that encourages the use of student questionnaires (based on an accepted format) to collect feedback. Such questionnaires should be completed anonymously.

14. It is recommended that one set of questionnaires are used on completion of a unit; another on completion of a programme. Departments may adapt the questionnaires given in the Annexures to this Code of Practice, to their particular needs, and to follow the notes of guidance.

15. When adapting the draft questionnaires, departments should be aware that they have been drawn up with the needs of future Subject / Programme Reviews in mind and therefore extensive revision may dilute the efficacy of the questionnaires.

16. The `end of programme' questionnaire is designed for use at the end of a programme of study but could be adapted for use at the end of a year if required. It is recommended that the questionnaire be issued in a formal teaching session and that students be allowed sufficient time to complete it during that session. It is often helpful if academic staff leave the room while students are completing questionnaires (programme or unit) and a designated student is asked to collect questionnaires and return them in a sealed envelope to the departmental office.

17. It is important that students should not be asked to complete too many unit questionnaires so as not to lead to `questionnaire overload'. It is recommended that a sampling approach be adopted, to give a range of responses from a variety of students taking each unit and that departments develop a co-ordinated approach to this in consultation with other departments teaching the same students.

18. It is not considered necessary for all units to be evaluated in this way annually, although a regular pattern of use of questionnaires should be developed.

19. It is also helpful to give students advanced warning that they will be asked to undertake this task, both at the beginning of a unit and just before they are asked to complete the questionnaire.

20. If students are unenthusiastic about completing questionnaires, it is sometimes helpful to consider the format and circumstances in which they are issued. Alternatively, in some departments, especially those where electronic mail and other IT applications are regularly used, it may be

most effective and efficient to ask students to complete questionnaires electronically. Setting up such a system may take time, but once in place can have a number of advantages: it makes the task more interesting to students, reduces the costs of data entry and quantitative results are easier to analyse.

## Analysis

21. Departments should decide for themselves how to achieve the most effective analysis of the data collected but both quantitative and qualitative analysis is required.

22. An appropriate member of staff should be involved in analysis but should not be the only person to see results of feedback; other members of staff who will find it helpful to see results are programme or unit directors, those involved in curriculum design, planning and review and the Head of Department.

23. Results of questionnaires can be helpful in the staff review process and in supplying information on teaching abilities for promotion purposes

24. Some departments may find it helpful in involving students in the process of analysis, but it is recommended that this should be at the discretion of the individual departments.

## Feedback to Students

25. Providing students with feedback as a result of completion of questionnaires is essential. It offers an incentive to students for completing the questionnaire and also very importantly provides evidence that feedback has been sought and that issues rose are being pursued.

26. Where possible, it is good practice to state on the questionnaire how feedback will be provided to students. Some suggestions for channels for providing feedback are: through the staff/student committee; posting details on student notice-boards; utilising the departmental web site.

## Student Forums

27. This is often a very effective mechanism for obtaining feedback. Such events usually provide retrospective discussion of programmes and can be held annually after semester examinations, or at any other time a department thinks is appropriate.

28. As with staff/student committees, forums provide immediate feedback on a wide variety of aspects of the students' experience, both academic and mentoral. It is often helpful if the discussions which take place at these events are recorded, even if informally. This enables the department to focus clearly on the issues raised and to take appropriate action.

## Other Mechanisms of informal feedback

29. If a system is in place for assignment of students to specific tutors, it is recommended that this system be also used for receiving informal feedback.

30. In small departments, or where there is close student/staff contact, informal feedback is much easier to obtain: staff and students see one another regularly and have greater opportunities for discussion.

31. In dealing with large batches of students, newsletters may be used very effectively, both to inform students and to receive feedback.

# ANNEXES: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRES

## Annex 1. EVALUATION OF TEACHERS BY STUDENTS

### Evaluations:
This will be done by students in the following manner
a)   Random selection of individuals in a large class
b)   Groups in a large class
c)   All individuals in a small/large class

### Time:
At the end of each course by a teacher preferably at the latter part of the last class taken by a particular teacher. The evaluation must be carried out prior to examinations and/or grading.

### Method:
Questionnaire develop to ensure anonymity.

Assessment of Evaluation:

By the individual teacher conducting the evaluation as the primary objective is to improve the quality of teaching of individual staff members.

### Types of Lessons to be evaluated:
a)   Theory classes

b)   Practical classes

c)   Field visits

**THEORY LESSON**

Course Number and Title ........................... Day and Time ...............

Teacher ..................................................................

Instructions: Please answer all questions by circling one out of numbers 1 -5 against each statement.

The number 1 - 5 correspond to the statement:

5 - Strongly agree

4 - Agree

3 - Neither agree nor disagree

2 - Disagree

1 - Strongly disagree

a. The lectures helped to improve knowledge. 5 4 3 2 1

b. The teacher was confident in teaching the subject. 5 4 3 2 1

c. The methods of teaching adopted were good.
(lectures, discussions, presentations, tutorials, case studies etc) 5 4 3 2 1

d. The teaching aids were used effectively during the lecture. 5 4 3 2 1
(chalk board, overhead projector, handouts, slides, specimens etc)

e. The lecture was conducted at all acceptable pace. 5 4 3 2 1

f. The teacher encouraged questions by students and discussed them.
5 4 3 2 1

g. The lectures were clear and interesting.
5 4 3 2 1

h. The teacher was punctual.
5 4 3 2 1

i. The classes were conducted as indicated in the time-table. 5 4 3 2 1

j. The course outline/syllabus given at the beginning was covered.
5 4 3 2 1

The overall grading of the course : Very good 5      Good - 4

Any other comments :      Satisfactory - 3   Poor - 2    Very poor - 1

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# PRACTICAL LESSON

Course Number and Title ............................... Day and Time .................

Instructions: Please answer all questions by circling one out of numbers 1 -5
against each statement.

The number 1 - 5 correspond to the statement:

5   -   Strongly agree

4   -   Agree

3   -   Neither agree nor disagree

2   -   Disagree

1   -   Strongly disagree

a. Lessons provided opportunities to develop
skills related to the subject.      5 4 3 2 1

b. The practical lessons were well organized.      5 4 3 2 1

c. Adequate guidelines/handouts were given
prior to each lesson.      5 4 3 2 1

d. A teacher was available during the practical for
guiding students.      5 4 3 2 1

e. The principle of each practical lesson was explained.      5 4 3 2 1

f. The teacher provided adequate demonstrations.      5 4 3 2 1

g. The lessons had adequate demonstrators and
technicians for assistance.      5 4 3 2 1

h. The teacher stimulated independent thinking of
students by discussions .      5 4 3 2 1

i. The lessons were held as indicated in the time table.      5 4 3 2 1

j. Periodical assessments were conducted.      5 4 3 2 1

The overall grading of the course : Very good 5      Good - 4
Satisfactory - 3    Poor - 2    Very poor - 1

**Any other comments :**

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**FIELD VISITS**

Course Number and Title ............................. Day and Time ...............

Instructions: Please answer all questions by circling one out of numbers 1 -5 against each statement.

The number 1 - 5 correspond to the statement:

5  -  Strongly agree

4  -  Agree

3  -  Neither agree nor disagree

2  -  Disagree

1  -  Strongly disagree

a. The field visit was timely.                                        5 4 3 2 1

b. The visit was well organized.                                      5 4 3 2 1

c. The location selected was appropriate to meet the
   stated objectives.                                                 5 4 3 2 1

d. The visit was useful to strengthen knowledge
   gathered in lectures.                                              5 4 3 2 1

e. Aims and objectives of the visit was explained
   at the beginning.                                                  5 4 3 2 1

f. A teacher accompanied the students.                               5 4 3 2 1

g. The Teacher/Resource Person discussed subject
   matter during the visit.                                          5 4 3 2 1

h. The Teacher/Resource Person was responsive to student
   questions during the visit.                                       5 4 3 2 1

i. The Teacher/Resource Person encouraged student
   participation                                                     5 4 3 2 1

j. I recommend this field visit to be continued                      5 4 3 2 1

The overall grading of the course : Very good  5         Good - 4

**Any other comments :**                    Satisfactory - 3    Poor - 2    Very poor - 1

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# FORMAT FOR STUDENT FEEDBACK ON STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of study programme: ..............................................

Day and Time ......................

This survey is being conducted to find out your views on all the different activities you participated in during your period of study in the University. Please tick the relevant box in the column that <u>best</u> expresses <u>your</u> opinion.

## PART I. Course units

| 1. ......... (course code and title) | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Can't remember |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1  Lectures | | | |
| 1.2  Tutorials | | | |
| 1.3  Any other activities ... | | | |
| 1.4  Contents covered in module | | | |
| 1.5  Sequence of learning activities | | | |
| 1.6  Support from staff | | | |

Comments:

| 2. ......... (course code and title) | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Can't remember |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1  Lectures | | | |
| 2.2  Laboratory classes | | | |
| 2.3  Tutorials | | | |
| 2.4  Any other activities ... | | | |
| 2.5  Contents covered in module | | | |
| 2.6  Sequence of learning activities | | | |
| 2.7  Support from staff | | | |

Comments:

| 3. ......... (course code and title) | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Can't remember |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 Lectures | | | |
| 3.2 Laboratory classes | | | |
| 3.3 Tutorials | | | |
| 3.4 Any other activities ... | | | |
| 3.5 Contents covered in module | | | |
| 3.6 Sequence of learning activities | | | |
| 3.7 Support from staff | | | |

**Comments:**

(Continue with as many sections as required)

# PART II. OVERALL ORGANIZATION OF STUDY PROGRAMME

| 4. Overall Structure and Sequence | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
|---|---|---|
| 4.1 The sequence (order) in which the course units were conducted was: | | |
| 4.2 The general organization of the study programme was: | | |
| 4.3 What was the best course unit? ............................................................. Why? | | |
| 4.4 What was the worst course unit? ............................................................ Why? | | |

# PART III. LEARNING RESOURCES

| 5. | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Can't remember |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1 Library textbooks | | | |
| 5.2 Other material in library | | | |
| 5.3 Computer Centre | | | |
| **Comments:** | | | |

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**General Comments (Suggestions for improvement are most welcome):**