Feedback on Exams
Academic Officer – Union of UEA Students

The Union has completed research on students'
views on exam feedback. The research examined
whether students would find feedback on exams
useful and investigated what form of feedback
they would like to see.

School-by-School breakdowns of results are
included in the Appendices.

1. Executive Summary

- UEA students overwhelmingly think that they would find feedback on exams useful. 86.1% of respondents agreed with the statement "I would find feedback on my exams useful".
- There is strong support for the introduction of personalised written feedback on exams (79.6%) and the return of exam scripts (72.6%).
- Nearly half of respondents to the survey (46.9%) supported the introduction of the opportunity of speaking to their academic adviser about their exam performance. 44.5% of respondents supported the provision of basic statistics and 42.4% of respondents supported the introduction of presentations about a whole cohort's performance.
- There was little support for student-to-student discussion of exam scripts (11.4%).
- As one might expect there was some considerable differences between students in different Faculties on which form of exam feedback would be supported. For instance, Faculty of Health students were far more supportive of a discussion with their adviser (62.6%) than students in the Faculty of Sciences (34%).
- First year undergraduate students were most likely to say they think that feedback on exams would be useful (93%) and it declined slightly for each subsequent year group (second 87.5%, third 85.2% and fourth plus 84.2%)

2. Feedback on Exams – a brief history

On the 11th February 2009 the Union's Academic Officer presented a paper, based on analysis of National Student Survey comments and discussions with student representatives, entitled "Feedback on Examinations" to the Exams and Course Tests Review Group. It included two recommendations:

A) To introduce for 2010 exam semester a policy requiring feedback on all "summer" examinations (not including course tests) for all non-finalists.

B) To examine the possibility of a system where student
be returned their own exam scripts.

An additional recommendation was added shortly afterwards.

C) Improved support for students that are preparing for

In the Summer 2009 the Union also encouraged students to w
for Feedback on the front of their exam script and in Summer 2
encouraging students to sign an online petition calling for bette
feedback.

3. Methodology of the Union's Annual Survey 2010

This year the survey was open between 1/3/10 and 31/3/10 an
students responded. 1654 students (around 12% of the total U
completed the section "Feedback on Exams" which this analys
upon. Initial analysis has shown that, with a few exceptions, the
are broadly representative of the student population at UEA[1].

The survey was publicised through cross-campus and targete
Union's website, social media such as Twitter and Facebook a
banner in the Square. Respondents were encouraged to fill in
cash prizes drawn randomly after the survey closed.

4. Usefulness of Exam Feedback

Table 1 shows the percentages of respondents who agreed wi
statement about finding feedback on exams useful. As might b
students' overwhelming perception is that they would find feed
useful.

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[1] Under-represented groups amongst the respondents:
Age: A smaller proportion of 26 year olds and over answered the survey co
UEA population.
Course type: the sample slightly under-represents taught postgraduates
Mode of Study: Part-time students were seriously under-represented in the
Faculty: A disproportionate number of Humanities and Science students an
while FOH and SSF were under-represented.
Students with disabilities were poorly represented in the survey.
Ethnicity: Our survey was a pretty good sample of the population with all et
represented. However, Chinese and Black African categories were under-re

Table 1 – Response to the question "I would find feedback on my exams useful"	
Response	Percentage responder
Strongly agree	60.4%
Agree	25.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	8.8%
Disagree	3.3%
Strongly Disagree	1.8%

As far as the Union is aware, there are only limited occasions v
University where students receive feedback on end of year exa
module organisers produce generic reports about the exam for
cohort of students who sat it and the School of Medicine provid
to students about which quartile their mark places them in to he
distinguish between a weak Pass and a strong Pass.

5. Different models of exam feedback

Table 2 shows which forms of feedback were supported by stu
question, respondents were able to select more than one optio

Table 2	
If the University introduced feedback on exams what form would you like it to take?	Percentag
Personalised, written feedback on the script	79.6
Return of exam script so I can work out where I can improve	72.9
One-on-one discussion with adviser or tutor	46.9
Basic statistics for exam results so I can see how well I did compared to others	44.5
Presentation by lecturer of frequent mistakes in subsequent seminars or lecture	42.4
Written report by module organiser sent to all students who sat exams	32.4
Student-to-student discussion of exams in subsequent seminar	11.4
Other	2.2

From *Table B* it is clear that personalised written feedback on t
least the script being returned are clearly the two most support
feedback on exams.

The next three most supported options for feedback on exams
discussion, basic statistics, presentation of mistakes) would be
resource implication and far easier to implement. They also do
of a considerable proportion of respondents and in some discip
considerably higher — see Appendices for School specific infor

The final option, of peer to peer feedback, did not receive signi
support. Peer-to-peer review of work is not often used at the U
this might have contributed to a lack of student support.

6. Undergraduate Stage

Respondents who were first year undergraduates were most li
think that feedback on exams would be useful (93%). There is
decline in support for each subsequent year group (second 87.
85.2% and fourth/fifth 84.2%)[2]. This suggests what might be e
learners towards the end of their course were less keen to rece
than students who are beginning their course.

As can be seen in *Table 3* undergraduate students are also m
favour person-to-person forms of feedback (i.e. presentations,
over reports and statistics. This suggests that particular forms
could be focussed on the first year of an undergraduate progra
enhance impact.

Table 3	First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Personalised, written feedback on the script	82.6	83.9	82.5
Return of exam script so I can work out where I can improve	77.4	74.5	72.5
One-on-one discussion with adviser or tutor	53.7	43	42.6
Basic statistics for exam results so I can see how well I did compared to others	46.9	44	43.4
Presentation by lecturer of frequent mistakes in subsequent seminars or lecture	47.7	40	40.5
Written report by module organiser sent to all students who sat exams	31.7	32.2	33.1
Peer-to-peer feedback	15.1	10.2	9.5
Other	1.2	1.9	1.6

[2] Undergraduate students in their fourth year or above are focussed in spec
University so some caution is required when considering the fourth year an

7. Faculty and School

Students across all Faculties thought that they would find feedb
useful. Table C shows the small range (5.6%) between each o
Faculties:

Table C	
I would find feedback on my exams useful	% Agr
UEA	86.
Faculty of Science	88.
Faculty of Social Sciences	85.
Faculty of Health	89.
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	84.

There were some differences between students in different Fac
considering which method of feedback students preferred:

Figure 1   **Methods of Feedback - Faculty**
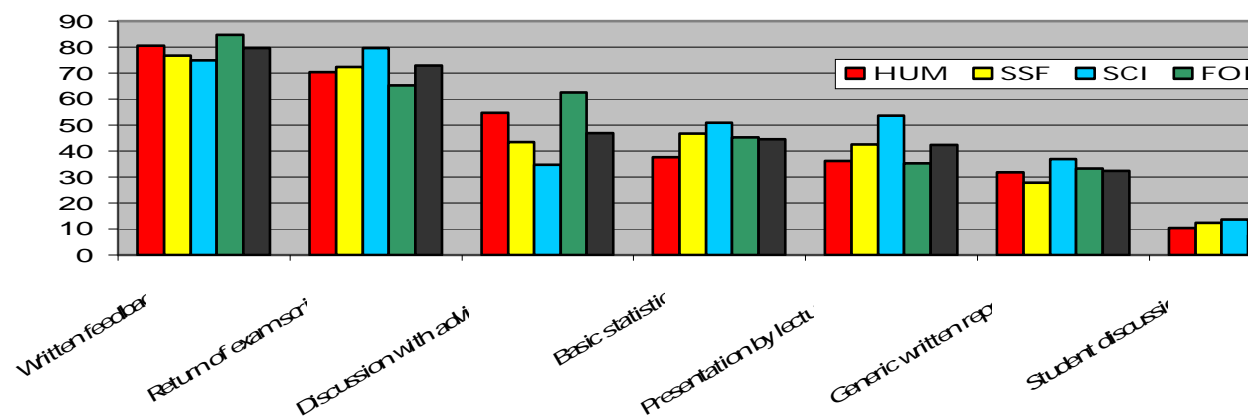
As can be seen from *Figure 1* the most obvious difference occu
or not students would value a discussion with their adviser. Th
may reflect differing levels of uptake for the advising system ad
University.

When the results are broken down to the level of the School, re
reflect the type of learning that takes place in a particular Scho
of students in numerical subjects like ECO (52.5%) and CMP (
the provision of basic statistics whereas only 30% of ART stud
of MUS students do. Further details can be found in the Appen

8. Conclusions

As might have been expected this research confirms that stude
Schools would value feedback on exams. The provision of fee
exams is a complex problem and we recognise that the Univer
balance what will be welcomed by students with changes to ac
processes. It is also important to differentiate between the vari
exam that the University uses — open book, closed book, pre-r
— and feedback will obviously differ in relation to the nature of t
assessment. What is clear is that most students would like to s
improvement from the situation where the only information or fe
receive about examination performance is a mark or grade.

With this in mind, we recommend that the University should:

1. Encourage School Directors of Teaching and Learning to us
in the Appendices to pilot "lower resource" forms of feedback c
appear to be supported by a good percentage of students in th

2. Provide basic statistics (breakdown of marks by question or
presented in deciles or quartiles) to all students about their exa
performance.

3. Reduce the summative assessment burden for students and
in-depth feedback on fewer pieces of assessment and continu
formative assessment. A lighter touch assessment regime shou
much easier to introduce the most popular forms of exam feed
future.

Appendix A: Faculty of Arts and Humanities

	AMS	ART	FTV	HIS	LCS	LIT	MUS	PHI	PSI	HUM	UEA
Respondents	59	30	51	132	39	119	14	28	86	558	1654
I would find exam feedback useful (% Agree)	83%	77%	77%	89%	92%	88%	79%	89%	85%	84%	86%
Methods											
Personalised, written feedback on the script	80%	87%	81%	84%	87%	90%	64%	68%	85%	81%	80%
Return of exam script so I can work out where I can improve	76%	70%	71%	70%	77%	83%	57%	61%	69%	70%	73%
One-on-one discussion with adviser or tutor	56%	43%	48%	64%	64%	62%	71%	46%	37%	55%	47%
Basic statistics for exam results so I can see how well I did compared to others	42%	30%	42%	41%	44%	47%	29%	32%	31%	38%	46%
Presentation by lecturer of frequent mistakes in subsequent seminars or lecture	27%	40%	40%	38%	41%	49%	21%	29%	41%	36%	42%
Written report by module organiser sent to all students who sat exams	34%	30%	44%	29%	36%	31%	35%	18%	28%	32%	32%
Student-to-student discussion of exams in subsequent seminar	7%	3%	17%	12%	15%	12%	0%	14%	13%	10%	11%
Other	0 %	0%	4%	2%	3%	3%	14%	4%	1%	3%	2%

Appendix B: Faculty of Heath

	AHP	MED	NAM	FOH	UEA
Respondents	61	101	34	196	1654
I would find exam feedback useful (% Agree)	91%	91%	88%	90%	86%
Methods					
Personalised, written feedback on the script	84%	82%	88%	85%	80%
Return of exam script so I can work out where I can improve	59%	75%	62%	65%	73%
One-on-one discussion with adviser or tutor	56%	58%	74%	63%	47%
Basic statistics for exam results so I can see how well I did compared to others	39%	55%	41%	45%	45%
Presentation by lecturer of frequent mistakes in subsequent seminars or lecture	38%	33%	35%	35%	42%
Written report by module organiser sent to all students who sat exams	23%	35%	41%	33%	32%
Student-to-student discussion of exams in subsequent seminar	8%	3%	12%	8%	11%
Other	2%	3%	0%	2%	2%

Appendix C: Faculty of Science

	BIO	CHE	CMP	ENV	MTH	N/ S
Respondents	98	60	65	153	41	1
I would find exam feedback useful (% Agree)	86%	97%	78%	88%	88%	10
Methods						
Personalised, written feedback on the script	76%	75%	77%	82%	71%	80
Return of exam script so I can work out where I can improve	76%	80%	80%	73%	73%	10
One-on-one discussion with adviser or tutor	32%	28%	35%	33%	39%	33
Basic statistics for exam results so I can see how well I did compared to others	47%	43%	52%	40%	51%	80
Presentation by lecturer of frequent mistakes in subsequent seminars or lecture	50%	57%	51%	39%	61%	67
Written report by module organiser sent to all students who sat exams	34%	30%	43%	35%	44%	33
Student-to-student discussion of exams in subsequent seminar	10%	10%	15%	10%	12%	27
Other	3%	3%	5%	1%	0%	0

Appendix D: Faculty of Social Sciences

	DEV	ECO	EDU	LAW	NBS
Respondents	53	62	58	91	98
I would find exam feedback useful (% Agree)	80%	89%	87%	87%	78%
Methods					
Personalised, written feedback on the script	77%	85%	60%	86%	71%
Return of exam script so I can work out where I can improve	74%	77%	71%	66%	66%
One-on-one discussion with adviser or tutor	17%	43%	57%	47%	41%
Basic statistics for exam results so I can see how well I did compared to others	42%	53%	40%	46%	50%
Presentation by lecturer of frequent mistakes in subsequent seminars or lecture	38%	51%	40%	53%	38%
Written report by module organiser sent to all students who sat exams	13%	39%	31%	33%	27%
Student-to-student discussion of exams in subsequent seminar	4%	15%	10%	15%	13%
Other	0%	3%	2%	2%	3%