<u>Characteristics of Good Feedback – Responses from Tutor Development Sessions 5 th & 7th April 2006</u>

The following is a list of some of the characteristics of good feedback and general discussion points collated by myself and the tutors:

- Underlying mantra: give to students what you would expect to be given as a student. Students expect their work to have been read and considered.
- Feedback should be positive and forward looking, building on existing strengths and helping students to improve in future work. A 'sandwich' approach was suggested: positive feedback, followed by suggestions for improvement (rather than overtly negative criticism), reinforced by a final piece of positive feedback.
- An often overlooked, yet crucial point: feedback should be legible!
- Feedback should be transparent and assessment standards should be consistent between students.
- The use of standardised marking sheets (preferably developed in consultation with other tutors in the unit and/or the unit coordinator) was suggested as a good way to save time and to demonstrate transparency and consistency, particularly when marking a large volume of work.
- Students should be aware of the criteria tutors use to evaluate their work. This is probably best done by including a copy of the marking criteria when distributing the assignment.
- Examples of grade descriptors for written assignments and tutorial participation are available from the Faculty's Unit of Study Outline template resources (http:// teaching.econ.usyd.edu.au/UoS/2_4_details.html).
- It is useful to distribute grade descriptors to international/exchange students and make sure they are aware of the university grading system to minimise any adverse shocks they may experience when receiving their marks.
- Feedback should be timely (given to the students as soon as practicable after the assignment is completed) and frequent. You can give students informal feedback in tutorials every week by identifying concepts they are comfortable with, or having difficulty understanding.
- The way in which you respond to emails is up to you (there is no separate payment for answering them), but they can constitute an important mechanism for providing feedback. If an answer is of relevance to all students in the group, CC your response to them (with the permission of the student who sent the email). You may also want to post feedback on Blackboard etc.
- It is important to identify students who are or may have difficulty with pre-requisite knowledge for the course (such as background maths and English expression) and refer them to appropriate university services for assistance. The website for the Learning Centre is: http://www.usyd.edu.au/stuserv/learning_centre/
- The website for the Mathematics Learning Centre is http://www.usyd.edu.au/stuserv/maths_learning_centre/
  Maths quizzes to test & develop basic maths skills are available at http://quiz.econ.usyd.edu.au/mathquiz/
  Students can make an appointment with the Faculty's Student Learning Adviser Dr Michael Paton for one-to-one support (ph: 935 15569 Email: m.paton@econ.usyd.edu.au)

Anika Gauja, April 2006

- Students must now undertake an Academic Honesty module on Blackboard and also have access to Safe Assignment through this site. If you suspect that work has been plagiarised, do not attempt to take matters into your own hands, but consult the unit of study coordinator. The University's policy on plagiarism is available at: http://www.usyd.edu.au/senate/policies/Plagiarism.pdf

There are several ways to save time when marking a large number of written assignments:
- Keep a diary/log of key suggestions, improvements and phrases that may be applicable to more than one student.
- Use a word processing program to cut and paste comments, rather than writing it all out by hand.
- Sort assignments into groups based on grade awarded (CR, D, HD etc) and then rank papers against each other in a particular pile to achieve a numeric mark.
- Think about how much time you want to spend correcting grammar and style. How important is this to the overall assignment? One suggestion is to only correct the first paragraph in detail as an example to students.