

CS DEPARTMENT
Guidelines for Student Feedback
1/3/17 -- DRAFT v3

Purpose of Feedback

The CS Department is committed to excellence of instruction. Feedback from instructor to student is critical to achieving excellence. Under our accreditation, we are required to monitor the kinds and effectiveness of feedback we offer. These guidelines set department standards for timeliness and usefulness of feedback.

Feedback refers to all communications from instructor to student that inform the student about progress in learning the class material. It can come in the form of comments on tests, homework, and projects; class discussions about the answers to tests; and individual sessions between instructor and students. Students rely on the feedback to focus their efforts where it is most needed and to correct when they are “off course”. Our students carry a full course load and are sensitive about their time – feedback helps them determine where to allocate time for additional studies.

From the student’s perspective, the first year of courses is like “scouting known territory”, learning the map of already settled computer science knowledge. Feedback should be rapid and help students to understand when they are lost. The second year is like “exploring new territory”, investigating as yet unsettled questions. Feedback occurs in regular meetings of students, thesis advisors, and advanced-class instructors.

Quality of feedback is very important to students. Sections with high quality feedback are usually rewarded with good SOFs.

Guidelines

Feedback should be timely, useful, and individualized.

- *Timely*: Generally, test results should be returned to students with comments within 7 calendar days. Homework should normally be returned with comments within 7 days unless the instructor has pre-arranged a longer return period with the class. Comments on homework should also be available before the due dates of subsequent homework that depends on them. Comments on major course projects (due near end of quarter) should be available before grades are turned in.
- *Useful*: Comments should help students determine if they are on track, and if not, what they are missing or misunderstanding. Although students value written comments on tests and homework, they also value class discussions about which answers are wrong or incomplete and which are worthy of special mention. Instructors need to interact with students to learn whether comments are useful.
- *Individualized*: Each student is different. The objective of good feedback is that each student assesses that he or she is discovering what they need to learn and is taking the steps needed to learn what is missing.

Instructors can further clarify their expectations by specifying in their course management document how feedback works in their classes.

Instructors should never assign work whose due date is beyond the end of the course (defined as the end of final exam period) unless the student has been approved for an incomplete. Instructors can extend deadlines originally set by end of course into the final exam period on arrangement with their students, for example, to allow extra time to complete a difficult assignment or project.

Instructors should turn in all grades by the deadline specified by the registrar.

Office Hours

Office hours and individually scheduled appointments are opportunities for students to discuss their progress in person and to give or receive feedback.

Instructors should be available during their published office hours. Instructors without published office hours or with limited office hours should also welcome students visiting them by appointment.

Feedback to the Chair

Students should let instructors know immediately if particular feedback seems to be late or is not useful to them.

The chair has an open-door and open-channel policy. Students are asked to communicate immediately with the chair (cc program office and academic associate) if their instructors are not following feedback guidelines and are not responding to student requests for better feedback. The chair will work with the instructor to get feedback process on track.

The department will offer a student feedback meeting at the start of each quarter so that students can give their feedback on courses of the previous quarter.

Working with the program officer and academic associate, the chair will monitor for recurring feedback problems and work with faculty and students to resolve them.