
Good Practice in Assessment

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Welcome from the authors

This compendium of ideas and resources is for all colleagues involved in the practice and processes of assessment across UCL. It is based on research with staff across the university, and we hope it will be of particular use when you are engaged in planning your modules and programmes. We don't presume to tell you how best to assess your subject – you are the subject specialists – but we hope you find some useful ideas that might enhance what you already do. If you would like to learn more or just fancy a chat about assessment, then please do get in touch because we love talking about it!



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Our thanks to our outstanding research assistant, Lydia May Townsend, and to UCL Institute of Education colleagues Professor Norbert Pachler, Professor Becky Francis, Professor David Scott, Dr Gwyneth Hughes, Dr Tracey Allen, Dr Emma Wisby and, from ARENA, Dr Jenny Griffiths, for feedback and suggestions.





Introduction

This assessment resource is designed to support:

- reflections on current assessment practices
- broadening the ways in which assessment is used in HE
- developing conversations between staff and students about the role, purpose and design of their assessment
- developing assessment as both a measurement tool and way of enhancing teaching and learning.

Assessment context

Educators (hereafter referred to as staff)¹ in higher education (HE) have more control and autonomy in assessment than those in any other phase of education. Universities regulate this assessment in order to ensure standards both nationally and internationally. Within this framework it is good for staff to reflect on the robustness of their assessment practice and on whether their chosen methods of assessment are supporting and capturing the desired learning and development to best effect.

→ PRINCIPLE

HE staff have considerable freedom to construct assessments that relate directly to course priorities and employ a variety of assessment strategies.

The advent of student fees and the ranking of universities based on their teaching provision has brought a political dimension to HE pedagogical practice and so the importance and visibility of assessment has increased. Equally, debate on the efficacy of and trust in assessment has never been more public, with concerns being voiced over grade inflation and falling standards. National student surveys (such as the NSS and PTES) reveal assessment and feedback to be areas in which the sector continually receives low ratings from students themselves. What these data mean is complex and it is important therefore to characterise the data as indicators of a lack of clarity regarding the value and perception of assessment practice rather than very specific issues that can be ‘fixed’ quickly.

¹ We use this term to include all staff who have some kind of responsibility for student assessment – through teaching, assessment development and marking.

UCL is addressing assessment and feedback in its Education Strategy 2016-21 (Objective 3). This includes efforts to build a greater understanding, among staff and students, of:

- √ *What* HE assessments are for,
- √ *Who* they are for,
- √ *How* assessment judgments are made, and
- √ *How* they are interpreted by stakeholders.

These concerns and efforts relate to both summative and formative assessment; each of these modes of assessment, as well as the balance between them, requires careful consideration (Torrance, 2012). This resource is intended to contribute to debate and reflection on all of these aspects of assessment practices within UCL.

→ PRINCIPLE

Priorities in this resource are firmly rooted in well-evidenced pedagogical and assessment processes that are fundamental to great teaching in HE.

All proposals for changes to assessment should be checked against the details of your module/programme *Amendment and Approval* documentation. Programme and module leaders are responsible for meeting the quality assurance standards relating to assessment design and practice. If you wish to make significant changes it's a good idea to discuss them with a range of peers and students, and seek support from your Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Group and the Faculty Tutor. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/chapters/chapter-7-programme-and-module-approval-and-amendment-framework>

Whilst making changes requires approval and some administration, it is a great opportunity to reflect on assessment practice and to engage in wider formative and summative assessment diets and pedagogical approaches.

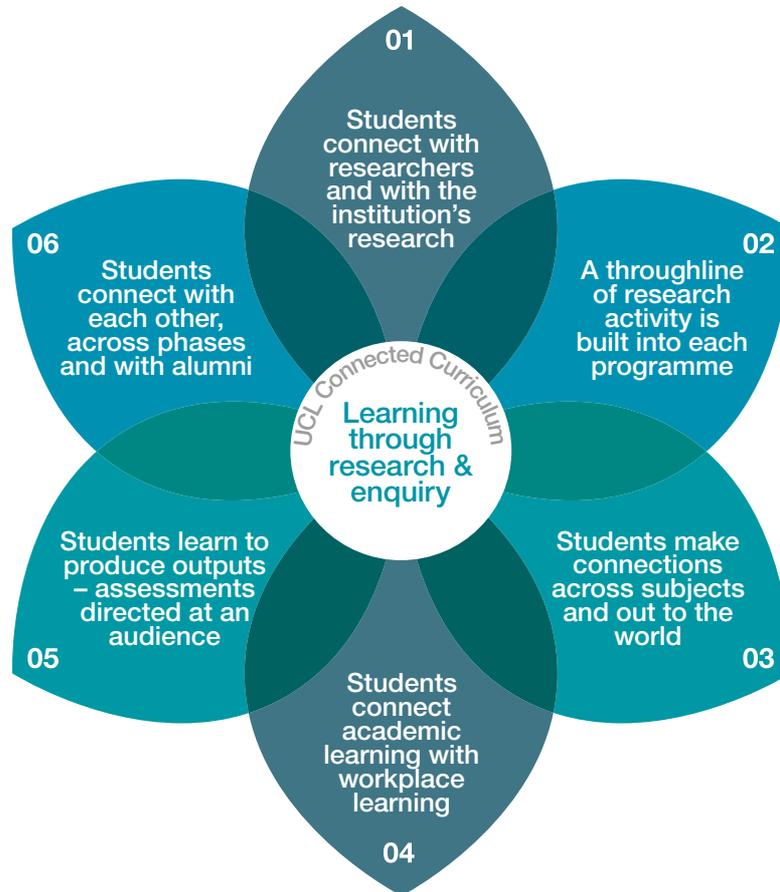
Throughout the resource is a central theme of ensuring equity – being aware of how best to accommodate students' needs alongside providing a valid assessment for learning. *If you wish to read more on any of the issues covered, please see the thematic reference list (Section 10).*

→ PRACTICE

As the UCL Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2015 – 2020 states, it is the goal of all who are a part of the university to ensure we support a culture of inclusion in which we actively use our expertise and research to ensure fair access to education. Such goals apply to all facets of our work, including how we assess our students.

This resource links closely to the objectives of UCL's Connected Curriculum (See Figure 1 opposite): <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-initiatives/connected-curriculum>.

UCL's Connected Curriculum



The key principles are:

- Educating through dialogue and active, critical enquiry
- Creating an inclusive research and learning community
- Making connections across modules and programmes and beyond the classroom
- Creating assessments that mirror 'public engagement' in research
- Equipping students to address interdisciplinary challenges
- Exploring critically the values and practices of global citizenship
- Engaging students as partners in their education, and as co-producers of knowledge
- Improving the experiences both of students and of staff

Section 1: **Summary of good assessment practice**



Summary of good assessment practice

This section provides a summary of ideas for good practice and is meant to help support conversations with your teams, your peers and your students.

Be transparent and set expectations clearly

- Ensure your assessment practices are clearly set out in the course/module handbook.
- Ensure students' understanding and expectations are managed – e.g. by:
 - Explaining assessment and feedback methods, practices and timing clearly in the first session of the course
 - Providing clear expectations and time frames in the course/module handbook
 - (possibly) Providing exemplars and models of excellence for students to refer to
 - (possibly) Providing a specific session on the assignment/test as an integral part of the course.

Establishing shared understanding of teaching and learning

- What conversations are taking place across programme teams concerning the relationship between teaching and learning?
- Do changes to teaching styles, learning expectations and assessment modes incorporated into your modules match increasing student autonomy in achieving the intended learning outcomes?
- Are activities and tasks within modules structured to scaffold learning?
- Is there a notion of progression through a programme that is reflected in the pedagogy and assessment?
- Are the expectations explained to students?
- What scope is there for students to discuss understanding and action?
- Are students signposted to support for their learning?



Considering standard setting

Be aware that:

- Cohorts of students will differ and we should be aware of the impact this has on achievement – *you and your team might have to adjust your grading practice based on the changes you have noted.*
- Course content might change, and even if those changes are small they need to be reflected in the grading and judgments that are made – *ensure that a list of changes is noted at a programme meeting/review: the aim is transparency and reflection on practice.*
- Decisions about marks relate to core criteria, but also to subject-specific criteria; central to all summative decisions is being able to map a grade/ascribe a mark to your criteria so that the practice is clear – *ensure that you keep records following meetings so that you have the evidence to hand when second marking, at team days, etc.*

Developing good marking practice

The following are points of good practice:

- Marking should never be undertaken when you are tired or have had an alcoholic drink – *both of these impact your ability to mark fairly.*
- Marking should not be undertaken when you are upset – *research shows that markers will be harsher if they are stressed.*
- Marking needs to be spread over time – *research (Newstead and Dennis, 1994) shows that even expert markers become harsher in their marking if they mark for more than three hours in one go.*
- Do you have the right equipment to mark? If not, this needs to be recorded and flagged up to your line manager/head of department – *changes in marking practice such as e-assessment necessitate a review of your marking materials. You might be putting your health at risk if you do not ensure that you have the correct equipment to do the job.*

The role of external examiners

Questions to ask:

- Are they someone to be cautious of?
- Are they a friend who is doing you a favour?
- Or, are they a part of your teaching team – albeit at arm's length – another professional who provides a regular and objective view of your modules or programme?

If you are genuinely unsure whether your answer is the latter, then maybe a review of practice is necessary. This shouldn't feel like a judgment on you as an individual, rather it is another indicator of good assessment practice in a holistic context – the ability to reflect, review and make beneficial changes is the bedrock of successful assessment.

Simple steps to good summative assessment

Consider the following:

- Does the assessment fit the purpose?
- What do you want students to demonstrate and how will they do it within the framework of the assessment?
- How does the assessment design map onto the UCL criteria? What other criteria are there in use and how are these linked to grades?
- Are students clear about the criteria and what they mean?
- Have you created a coherent and valid mark scheme?
- Do all markers know how to mark this work?
- Have you discussed key impacts on the standards – the cohort, any changes to the curriculum, the content, staff?

Principles of good feedback

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) seven principles of good feedback practice are useful in helping us to understand good assessment in relation to self-regulation.

Good feedback:

1. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards).
2. Facilitates the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning.
3. Delivers high-quality information to students about their learning.
4. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
5. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
6. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
7. Provides information to teachers to help shape teaching.

Putting feedback into practice

Try to ensure that module teams consider the different types of feedback that they might use throughout a programme or module. Are all of these used to good effect? Which are your students finding most helpful? (See table below.)

- How have you explained to students how you are going to structure your feedback within your module?
- Can you initiate a dialogue with students to identify the feedback that they consider most valuable to them?
- Is feedback only a one-way monologue? Can you make it reciprocal?
- How are you enabling students to use feedback?
- Focus on three key points that are achievable and understandable so the student can feel confident about making changes.
- When giving electronic feedback, link an extended feedback explanation to a specific line within an essay, rather than waiting to the end of the work to write the point.
- Embed links to useful resources or relevant texts in the feedback given, assuming the e-assessment tools used are set up to do this.

| | |
|--|--|
| Identifying errors | |
| Giving praise | |
| Correcting errors | |
| Explaining misunderstandings | |
| Demonstrating correct practice | |
| Engaging students in thinking | |
| Suggesting further study | |
| Justifying marks | |
| Suggesting approaches to future assignments | |
| Linking to previous attainment (where appropriate) | |

Table 1: What do students find most useful from feedback? Adapted from Orsmond and Merry (2011)

Disadvantages of feedback

- Students see it as no more than a justification of their grade or mark when offered at the end of a module.
- They see different approaches used across modules and programmes that raise questions about fairness, quality and comparability.
- Lecturers find it time consuming, particularly with large cohorts.
- Electronic platforms can limit word counts for feedback.
- Too much feedback can be overwhelming.
- Not all students wish to achieve the best that they can.
- Some students are embarrassed to seek out further support following initial feedback.
- Assignments and feedback, both formative and summative, need to be carefully mapped so that timings are optimized for student learning.

Simple steps to peer and self-assessment²

- Give students short extracts of work (carefully chosen assignment exemplars or extracts) for them to mark and discuss with others in relation to assessment criteria.
- Ask students to submit drafts of work to which they attach their own self-assessment in relation to assignment criteria.
- Use session activities for peer-assessment and discussion. Encourage students to work with assessment criteria (and rubrics) to mark peer work (or exemplar work).
- Open discussion about how criteria are interpreted and how judgments are evidenced.
- Ensure that students understand how similarity measures in Turnitin are interpreted by staff and how students can use Turnitin effectively when drafting work prior to submission.

² www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/teaching-toolkits/assessment-feedback



Section 2:

Context for professional development and changing practices in assessment



Context for professional development and changing practices in assessment

Making changes to and varying assessment methods takes time and effort – for staff and students. The time taken for making amendments and a lack of confidence in selecting and deploying new methods are barriers for staff (see Deneen and Boud, 2014). For students, each new method demands they pay attention to new forms of making their knowledge and skills visible. There is also a risk that variation gets in the way of cross-department/disciplinary working. These are all issues for institutions and staff to remain mindful of in reviewing assessment practices and related provisions for staff development.³

→ PRINCIPLE

There is a genuine intention in this resource to value the skills and judgments which staff bring to assessment processes, to create a greater sense of openness to develop and share ways in which assessment practices can continue to be robust, fair and understood by students and employers as credible. Sat behind this principle are various important contextual factors, examples of which are provided below.

New technologies. An important change that has the potential to impact on all assessment practice – in terms of the content of feedback and the reliability of grades – is the advent of online marking. Using e-environments to mark work is still at a young stage in HE and, whilst the software (and hardware) provided to staff may not be perfect, it has value and we expect training for staff will improve skills, confidence and ultimately, will improve the reliability of marking practices. However, like all technology, it is just a tool that we can use to meet our needs. UCL were involved in a publication focused on e-assessment in 2017, which is available free to download:

<http://www.ble.ac.uk/ebook.html>

Another aspect of technological advance is of course the greater accessibility of essay-writing services, which may be just one reason for varying assessment methods.

→ PRACTICE

The role of technology in assessment is very important to discuss in this resource and to consider within the context of the HE sector. Online learning and electronic assessments have become commonplace in the twenty-first century; they have led to long-established university practices being changed and redefined (Gikandi, Morrow and Davis, 2011).

Changing relationships. The way in which students are engaged with their learning and build relationships with staff has shifted (Curran and Millard, 2016). Some of the reasons underpinning this may relate to the changed role of students, who are now often positioned as ‘customers’ who play a part in evaluating the quality of outcomes, and who are increasingly alert to the growing competition for ‘graduate jobs’. Somewhat in tension with this, changes can also be attributed to the way teaching and learning has been increasingly translated as a situated co-constructed activity in which students take on responsibility for their learning.

Staff do not so much direct learning but offer a range of key knowledge, link knowledge to sources of evidence and research, give opportunities for thinking to be challenged and offer sources of critique and analysis.

Contrasting and changing prior experiences of education. Assuming that all students already possess the skills and dispositions to be autonomous learners is a dangerous premise; the type of education students experience prior to studying in a university will influence their confidence and autonomy as learners. This point applies to both home and international students and their experience of assessments will impact their perceptions of learning in HE. As Stobart (2008) found, a focus on high-stakes testing leads to teaching and learning that is structured almost entirely around passing examinations. Such issues will permeate postgraduate courses too, particularly with large international cohorts whose experiences of undergraduate teaching have focused on summative assessment outcomes.

³ www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/overview – see Chapters 4 and 5.



A person wearing blue nitrile gloves is using a pipette to transfer liquid into a small vial. The background is a blurred laboratory setting. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

Section 3:
**Summative assessment –
grading and maintaining
standards**

Summative assessment – grading and maintaining standards

Until recently, universities in England generally used examinations – ‘finals’ – as their definitive mode of assessment. Students now receive grades/marks for assessments related to the modules/courses during their undergraduate or taught Masters studies. This seems to have exacerbated among many students a fixation on grades that runs throughout the course, and a common perception among students that summative assessments are ‘better’ or more important. Some of the factors noted in the previous section are also implicated in such perceptions.

→ PRACTICE

Whilst these changes to the ways in which student achievements are assessed and reported are generally positive, it is important that staff are cognizant of just how summative assessments can be viewed, and the impact that high-stakes assessments have on students’ attitudes to learning.

One task that staff face is helping students to understand that one type of assessment is actually not ‘better’, rather it is all dependent upon context as to which assessment is the most appropriate and relevant to a given situation. This discussion needs to be highlighted on a regular basis so that students (and staff) are not attracted to making blanket (and often invalid) statements in relation to assessment.

→ PRACTICE

As educators, it is important that we give ourselves space to think about our work, how it changes and, most importantly, how we respond to changes effectively.



The other task is that of maintaining standards. Research demonstrates that modular structures within undergraduate and graduate study have in themselves resulted in an increase in the level of award outcomes across the sector. Whilst this does not mean that marking is less rigorous or that coursework is making things easier, it does suggest that modular teaching and assessment is more accessible to a wider range of students and this often leads to questions about standards.

→ PRINCIPLE

A common misconception about assessment methods is that standards are more rigorous and valid in summative assessments, e.g. a test or examination, than they are in formative assessments. There is no evidence to support such claims and it is more useful to just see the two forms for what they are, **different ways of assessing for different purposes**.

Setting and maintaining standards

The maintenance of standards year upon year and across modules/programmes is central to good practice in assessment. When a new programme is created this is generally the most difficult part of the approval process; thereafter it is a case of reviewing and maintaining the standard. This means that we need to be cognizant of how we manage what is taught, how our students are learning, how we assess work and how we communicate with our students and colleagues. See Section 1, *Summary of good assessment practice*, for advice on how to maintain standards.

Good marking practice

→ PRACTICE

Marking practices must be clear to the students and to you/your team of markers. There are some serious questions that should be discussed as part of any review of standards.

When does marking happen? How do people mark? Are their approaches comparable and clear – do they align to the criteria? This level of detail is vital to ensuring validity and transparency in our practice and supporting equity in our procedures.

Moderation within and across modules

The way grades are used in relation to criteria needs to be seen as fair and consistent by students – within a module and across them. With many students taking modules across programmes this requires more robust procedures to ensure marking practices are consistent and that standards are equitable. Reflection on your moderation practice is vital because, as Koretz (2008) states, '[summative assessments] are incomplete measures, proxies for the more comprehensive measures that we would ideally use but that are generally unavailable'. We urge you to consider what is the best decision that can be made here; to what extent do we (as experts)

agree/disagree and how do we apply that to the work presented as evidence?

Ultimately, we are making the best decision we can to support the learner, but responsibility for these decisions is also supported by another layer of reflection and review: the process of external examination.

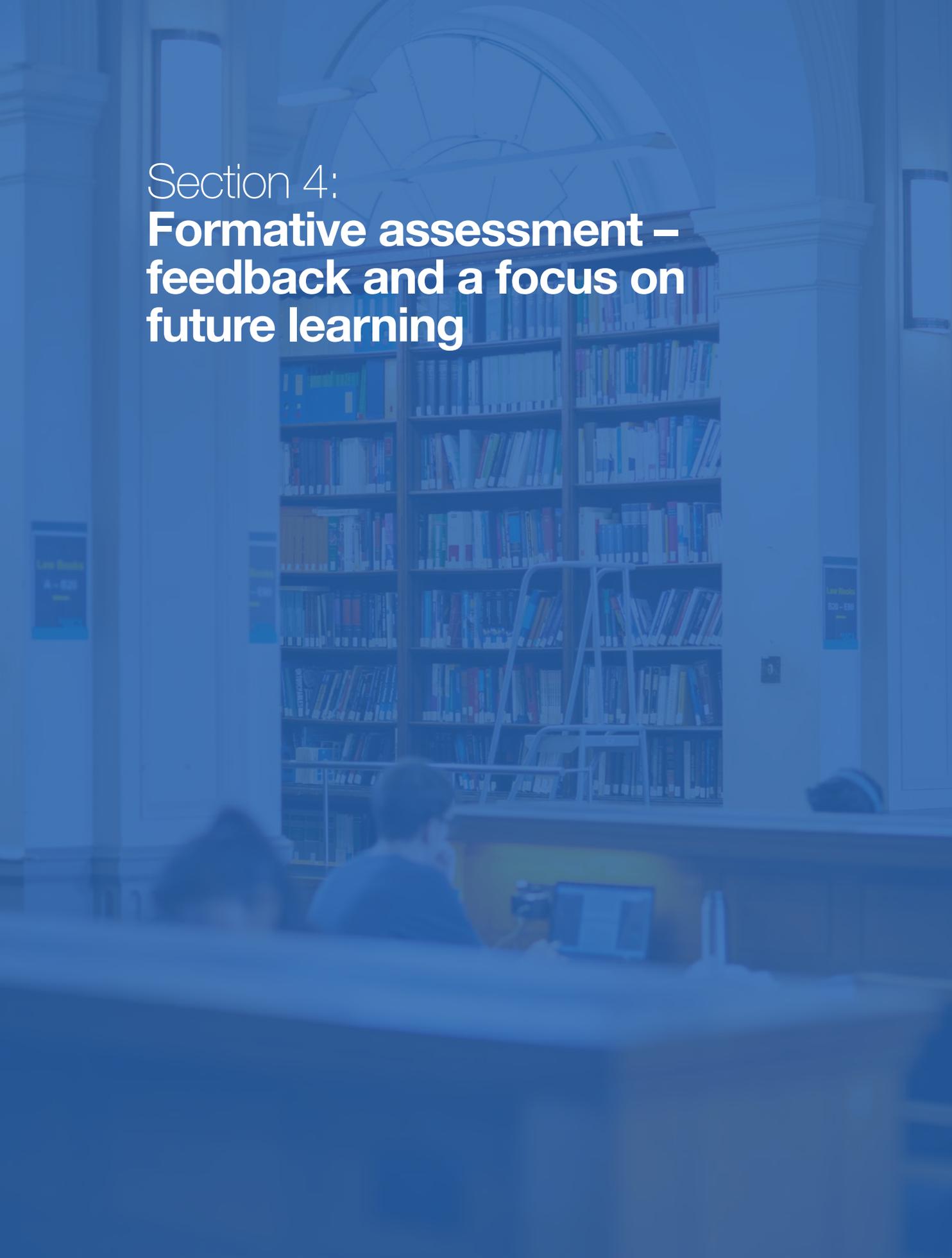
→ PRINCIPLE

Moderation provides reassurance that our practice as assessors is well aligned so that students can be sure that work is assessed fairly and in line with the institution's regulations. Good moderation allows for discussion; after all there is no such thing as a perfect assessment or a perfect outcome.

External examiners

Concern has been expressed that external examiners simply 'rubber stamp' the work that they view in institutions, but that is not what the role is intended to mean. If used well, your external examiner becomes someone who is able to enhance your ideas, suggest amendments and propose ways to continuously enhance your teaching and your students' learning.

Your relationship with them is important; see them as a strong ally and central to establishing and maintaining high quality assessment practice.



Section 4:
**Formative assessment –
feedback and a focus on
future learning**

Formative assessment – feedback and a focus on future learning

There is considerable research both promoting formative assessment in HE and outlining relevant tools and techniques. There is also a range of terminology, such as ‘assessment as learning’ and ‘assessment for learning’, that has been associated with formative assessment. Here we explain the broader field of formative assessment in a way that can also encompass more nuanced developments and applications. The use of the term ‘formative assessment’ embraces both teaching and learning (whereas assessment for learning is more focused on the design of ways to gain evidence that can subsequently be used to improve student learning).

→ PRINCIPLE

Of greatest significance is to recognize that formative assessment is not a tangible object. It is not a specific set of tools or techniques.

Formative assessment is a particular kind of interpretation drawn from evidence that enables better decisions to be made about teaching or learning.

For assessment to function formatively it is important to consider what types of evidence will enable the improvement of learning. Understanding how and when assessment data might be gathered should be secondary to the inferences drawn from it. On that basis, drawing a distinction between summative and formative assessment becomes a matter of the types of decisions that are intended. These might be to summarize and measure attainment (summative), or to adjust teaching and/or learning (formative).

Recognizing the time frame over which decisions need to be made is also essential. This may concern the short, medium or long term, and might involve different types of assessment evidence to support the required decisions.



Table 2: Differing formative assessment time frames in HE

| Formative assessment time frame | When formative assessment will occur | Types of formative decisions made |
|--|---|--|
| Formative assessment in the short term | Within and between lectures and tutorials | This draws on evidence immediately within or at the end of sessions that enables lecturers to make decisions about the choice of examples that might be shared, concepts explained or recapped. Students may adjust the way in which they engage with resources or thinking in a session or between sessions. |
| Formative assessment in the medium term | Within or between modules/units | Assessment evidence, which might be from feedback on draft work, students' own skills of self-assessment or a tutor's observations and interactions in sessions, is useful to enable students to further develop their assignments and to read more specifically in an area, or for a lecturer to restructure the final few sessions of a module. |
| Formative assessment in the long term | In an annual or programme cycle | Assessment evidence is used to make decisions such as how teaching sessions might be adapted in the following year to better support students' learning, or how assignment guidance could be improved over a longer term. Students might also want to consider their grade and feedback from one module to help them better understand how their learning might subsequently progress. |

The different time frames and sources of assessment data that will be most helpful in reaching decisions make formative assessment complex to understand in practice. Research shows that this has resulted in many practices that 'deliver' formative assessment to be carried out in a tokenistic way, compromising its relevance and purpose. Establishing some fundamental principles for formative assessment might be useful to counteract such tokenism:

Recognition of differing perspectives – staff and students will make decisions from assessment data (both formative and summative) in different ways. Their perspectives on the purposes and forms of assessment, teaching and learning may not be aligned. The way in which guidelines and requirements are interpreted and how these are linked to personal intent needs to be clear from all perspectives.

Change in power relations – whether at an institutional level or within programmes there are procedures, guidelines, deadlines and standards, all of which establish and present regulatory powers. If assessment is to function well formatively, the relationships between staff and students might need to be reconsidered so that there is greater sharing of power and purpose.

→ PRINCIPLE

Assessment that functions formatively must recognize that the power to learn resides with the student. Students are therefore identified as being empowered to learn and to improve within formative assessment.

Participation – although there is no particular learning theory that is part of understanding and framing formative assessment, there are assumptions that staff and students are actively participative. Formative assessment assumes that staff will reflect on their teaching and have the scope to adapt their practice when necessary; similarly it is for students to engage with feedback and adapt and demonstrate their learning.

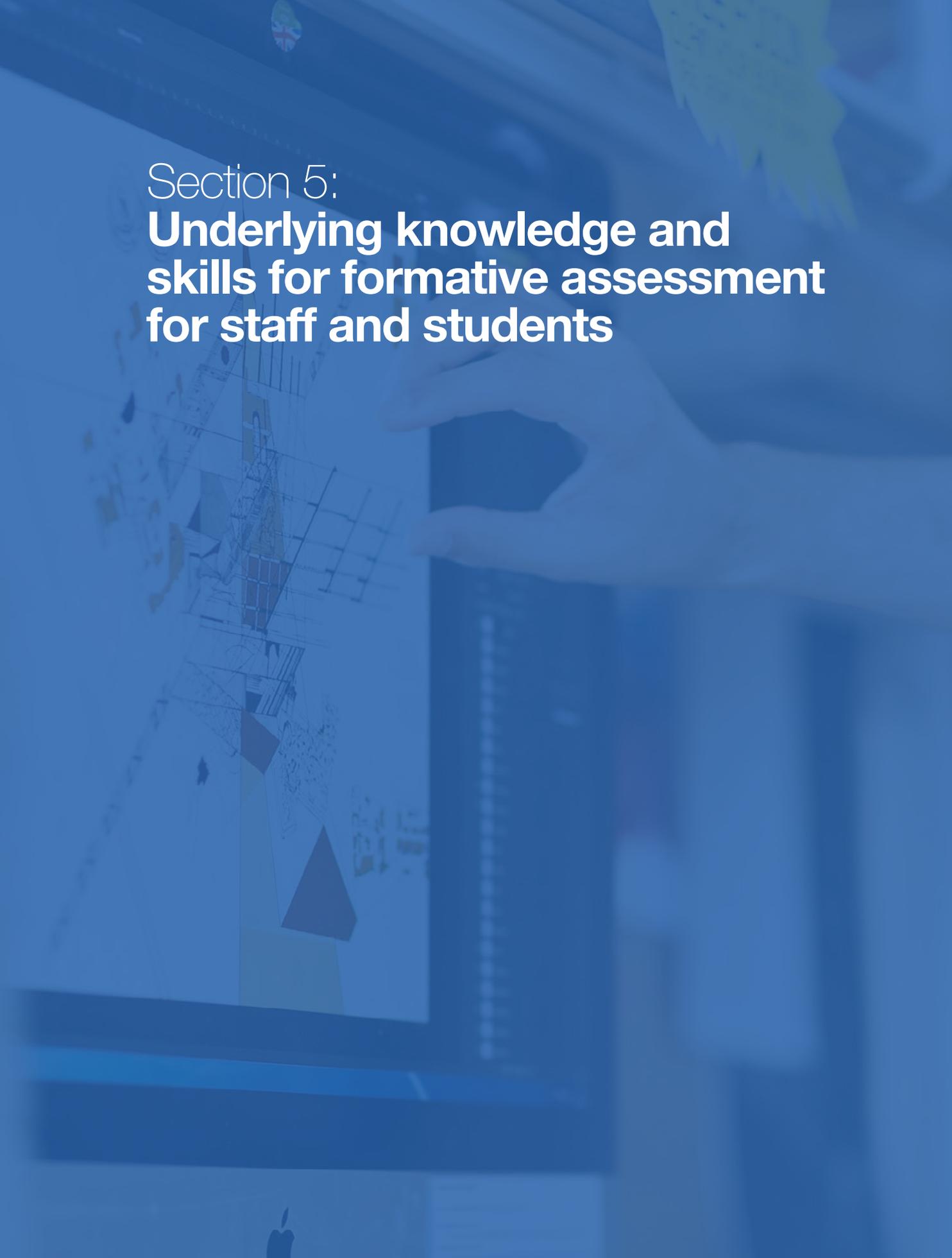
→ PRACTICE

There is an expectation that students will be actively involved in their learning, undertaking their own reading and questioning, reviewing what is new and linking it to challenge their existing thinking and ideas.

Varied sources of assessment data used in formative assessment should be selected to best inform the decisions that need to be made. The use of audio feedback, for example, is increasing in popularity and there is growing evidence that students are more likely to engage with it – see the case studies available through the UCL E-Learning wiki at: <https://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/UCLLearning/Audio+feedback>

Orientation to future learning – formative assessment is seeking to influence the learning (and teaching) that will follow. It is based on making inferences from evidence that can inform decisions about future learning.

Acceptance of uncertainty – for assessment to function formatively participants need to be open to different possibilities and be willing to consider change. This will include decisions based on assessment evidence but is also likely to require emotional and behavioural changes that might be more difficult to evidence and enact (e.g. evidence might suggest that students struggle with a particular concept, but other ways of teaching it might require more preparation time and a change to a session that you have previously enjoyed teaching). To embrace a different type of assignment is not only about trying to better reflect the learning intentions but also requires the programme team to change the way they assess, mark and present new guidelines and support for students.

The background image shows a hand pointing at architectural drawings on a table. The drawings include a grid, a ruler, and various geometric shapes. The entire image is overlaid with a blue tint.

Section 5:

Underlying knowledge and skills for formative assessment for staff and students

Underlying knowledge and skills for formative assessment for staff and students

This section is concerned with making knowledge and skills for formative assessment more explicit so that they can be shared, discussed and exercised.

→ PRINCIPLE

Engaging with formative assessment requires participation and the consideration of evidence to make possible changes to future actions. Making these more explicit so that they can be shared, discussed and exercised is important.

Key points are listed below:

- a) **A shared understanding of the relationship of teaching, learning and assessment** – this relates back to Section 4 and needs to be negotiated across lecturing teams and programmes and with students.
- b) **Confidence to take risks** – this relates to the ‘acceptance of uncertainty’ in Section 4. In what ways are staff supported to take risks? Is there scope within the institution for sessions to break from traditional forms, for the timings, the groupings and the formats to vary? There are likely to be institutional administrative issues to negotiate. Do staff have good knowledge of these parameters for their practice so that they are better able and more confident to adapt what they do?
- c) **Understanding what progression means and looks like.** Within programmes as well as within modules there will be a sense of progression in learning. In undergraduate courses, for example, levels 4, 5 and 6 are clearly differentiated. Where students’ progress is not reflected in the grades they receive this can result in negative perceptions of assessment. Ipsative assessment (assessment related to previous learning) is one strategy to deploy to avoid this (Hughes, 2014).
- d) **Self-regulated and co-regulated learning.** Enabling students to understand their own agency in regulating their own learning and co-regulating it with their peers or staff is an important skill. Pintrich and Zusho (2002: 64) offer a useful definition of self-regulation as ‘an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation and behaviour, guided and constrained by goals and the contextual features of the environment’.
- e) **Peer and self-assessment.** Students should be actively making judgments about their learning in order to make decisions about how they might change or adapt subsequent learning. It is important in formative assessment that students and staff understand each other’s judgments about standards and expectations so that each can make decisions to adapt teaching or learning based on the information that they share. The UCL IPAC research page is a useful resource for planning peer assessment: <https://bit.ly/2IOCNNj>
- f) **Dynamic staff and student learning relationships.** A more relational approach to formative assessment using dialogue and discussion is promoted in the research literature so that the way in which participants understand and develop their learning is considered alongside learning outcomes. Such dynamic relationships should be promoted between staff who teach students and those who perform the role of personal tutor.

Understanding and using feedback

Feedback is a key feature in both formative and summative assessment. However, within formative assessment it is a vital process. Student views of feedback and its usefulness are used as important success indicators in contemporary accountability systems in HE. Viewed in such a context, feedback tends to be seen in a technical sense, governed by issues of structure, turnaround time and length. Its educational value can become more marginal when the emphasis is on its form rather than its interpretation and subsequent use. Students report that they want feedback to serve a summative purpose in that they want the feedback they receive to justify the mark or grade given in relation to the criteria set out. However, they also want their feedback to be relevant to enable them to improve future work. In Section 1, *Summary of good assessment practice*, we have listed seven criteria for good feedback.

The UCL guidance on developing good feedback exemplifies the point that some students will need more support than others to translate feedback into changes to their own learning and to feel confident in doing so.⁴ The UCL Teaching Toolkits provide useful feedback proformas. We also suggest consideration of the key components of feedback in HE (see Table 3), which have proved useful to students and staff.⁵

→ PRINCIPLE

Essential in understanding feedback is that it is not a set of comments or a conversation or completed sheet, but information from which inferences and decisions can be made to adapt or modify teaching and/or learning.



⁴ https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/quickguide_good_practice_6steps_june2017.pdf.

⁵ <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/teaching-toolkits/assessment-feedback>

Table 3: Types of feedback (adapted from Orsmond and Merry (2011) and Hughes et al. (2015))

| Feedback type | Example | Usefulness for students to change learning |
|---|--|--|
| Identifying errors | Underline or circle words, '?' | |
| Giving praise | Ticks, 'good' | |
| Correcting errors | Correcting grammar and punctuation, dates... | |
| Explaining misunderstandings | This data is out of date... Don't forget... recent data shows... | |
| Demonstrating correct practice | Inserting correction, new sentence | |
| Engaging students in thinking | Why? Is this logical? Does this follow? Is there an alternative interpretation? | |
| Suggesting further study | 'See... for information', 'Try reading...' | |
| Justifying marks | 'I could not award a higher mark because of your comments here'. 'This analysis made a strong contribution to your grade'. | |
| Suggesting approaches to future assignments | 'In future assignments I recommend...'. 'Consider... in your future work'. 'Try to develop your...' | |
| Informing students of progress from previous attainment | 'I can see how you have developed this idea'. 'You have made real progress here'. | |

Within HE, feedback is typically still mainly associated with summative assignments. Even when feedback is offered in draft assignments it is often focused on the learning required for the summative assignment. Boud and Molloy (2013) shift the focus away from staff being the sole source of feedback for students, and recognize the important role of students as active agents in constructing and seeking their own learning pathways. They advocate that the HE learning environment should be a place where students are positioned as being active in their own learning development. Students can be encouraged to reflect actively on their own learning through the use of the My Feedback tool: this is under development in 2018, but is expected to be available in the near future; in order to keep this guide up to date, we recommend searching for My Feedback via Moodle on the UCL website.

Nicol, Thomson and Breslin (2014) evidence that students can gain more from giving feedback to peers than receiving it. However, the territory is often not straightforward as there are contradictions in relation to priorities and practices.

→ PRINCIPLE

'When students receive feedback from teachers they must engage in self-assessment if they are to use that feedback to improve academic performance: that is they must decode the feedback message, internalise it and use it to make judgements about and modify their own work' (Nicol, 2009: 339.)



Section 6: **Student perspectives**



Student perspectives

UCL privileges student understanding and involvement in teaching and learning, not only through the student surveys, but actively through the expertise development in *UCL Arena* (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/ucl-arena>) and through initiatives such as Changemakers where staff and students co-create research: (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/changemakers/ucl-changemakers-projects>). More recently, students themselves have created a tool to help each other learn about the value of engaging with feedback: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/exams-and-assessments/student-guide-assessment-and-feedback>

The NSS and PTES outcomes within UCL suggest that students generally find assessment and feedback to be lacking. So, what should staff do?

We need to consider how assessment is presented within the framework of programmes, then reflect on what we know about how students make sense of this information, and, finally, to initiate richer dialogues with students to help understand just where gaps might occur.

- What characterizes common mis/understandings about assessment?
- What do students think is a 'fair' assessment and how does this compare to our beliefs about fairness?
- What is within our control and what is not?

Assessment often proves particularly difficult for students who are struggling. It is sometimes only when the results are given that for some students a lack of understanding or engagement is revealed. It can be the case that students do not seek help hoping that they will pass anyway. Assessment literacy issues are situated at the heart of contemporary practice and it is time to focus on the core literacies in assessment practice for staff and students.

Staff should not assume that students will know what it is that they are doing when they are preparing for assessments – especially when more innovative methods of assessment are being used. Good practice when working with students includes giving them appropriate information about assessments, and this may include exemplars, peer feedback and reviews of draft work. Assessment literacy is also not just meant to cover the practice of creating an assessment; it is also about managing the process effectively. As Brown and Race (2013) note, the high-stakes nature of study in HE has engendered a culture where both the prospect and experience of assessments is stressful.

→ PRINCIPLE

The climate within a classroom is vital to consider, as Gielen and De Wever (2015) explain: setting the right tone for learning allows for a more open relationship between students and staff.



It is also increasingly important to help students understand the changing demands at educational transitions. This may be from school or college to university, from undergraduate to postgraduate, or between different education systems such as in the case of international students (see Section 10, *Thematic reference list*, for more resources). Without enabling students to understand how a new system is different from a previous system, learning is unlikely to advance well. We propose a series of questions for programme and module teams to ask when reflecting on their practice:

In what ways do programmes and modules explain requirements and support students to make changes to the way they learn?

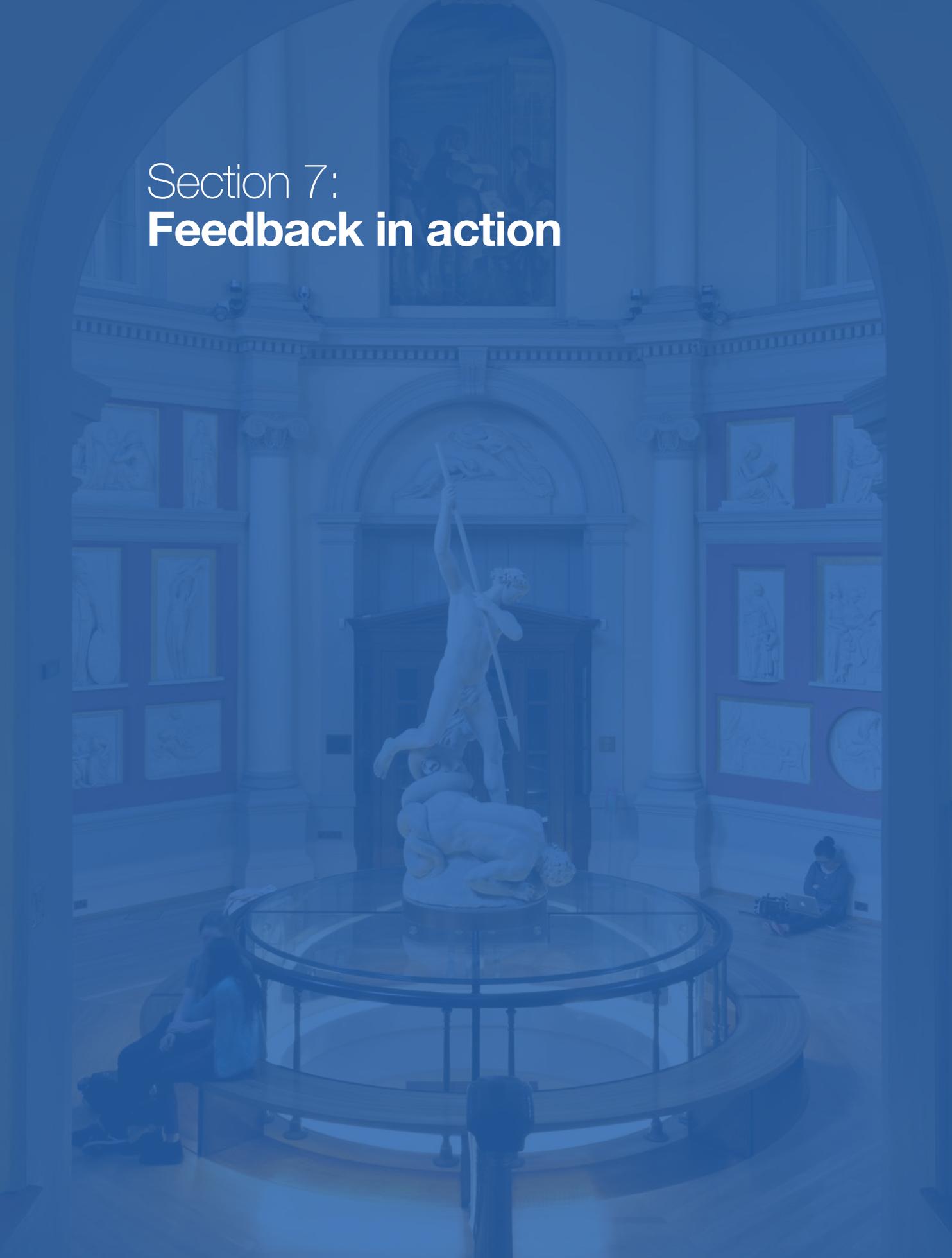
What have students experienced previously and how do they understand academic success?

What needs to change in order to successfully provide support for students? This might involve change for both the student and the lecturer.

In what ways can the academic writing team or the library support your students through your programme (consider both timing and focus)?



Section 7: **Feedback in action**



Feedback in action

What are the key advantages of feedback?

Feedback offers some transparency in the process of awarding grades and marks when it includes justifications of the outcomes awarded. Use of rubrics helps students see the extent to which different criteria have been satisfied and those areas that require further improvements. There are UCL-wide criteria that include a range of marks from 100 to 0. NB at the UCL Institute of Education markers still use a grading system of A-F and this has been integrated to include the grade boundary ranges. To provide an illustrative example, a fictitious module at M-Level might comprise the following criteria for staff and students to follow. Due to space restrictions here, we have focused on three grade boundaries:

Table 4: Exemplar grade descriptors

| Module criteria | A or 70%+ Distinction | B | C or 50%+ Pass | D ¹ | E Fail | F |
|---------------------------------|--|-----|--|----------------|---|-----|
| Grasp of knowledge | Produces work of an exceptional standard, reflecting excellent understanding of core concepts. | ... | Demonstrates a sound knowledge and understanding of material within a specialized field. | ... | Lacks knowledge and understanding of some key areas. | ... |
| Academic writing | Presents a clear, focussed description of the research topic and question(s), and ideas are clearly articulated and carefully cited. | | Presents information about the research topic and question(s). Ideas are basic with little critical analysis. Some errors in citation and presentation. | | Writing is poorly structured and vague. Lacks evidence of planning, referencing and proofreading. | |
| Methods | Demonstrates a strong understanding of research methods required to collect evidence related to the question. Highly organized, well analysed and clearly explained. | | Demonstrates a basic understanding of research methods required to collect evidence related to the question. Whilst there is evidence of organization and analysis of findings, the data/outcomes need more work to clarify and explain their relevance. | | No understanding of research methods is demonstrated. The method lacks rigour and is poorly structured. | |
| Module-specific criteria | Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of criteria implementation and is able to construct a range of innovative solutions to key issues. | | Can provide a workable solution to a problem with criteria validity. | | Unable to create a workable solution to a failing criterion. | |

¹ Grade D may be condonable in modules (but not core modules or parts of a professional requirement) of some programmes up to the value of 30 credits.

→ PRACTICE

This blog from the HEA can be a useful starting point for considering rubrics in greater depth: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/blog/importance-rubrics-higher-education-advances>

Whilst there are criteria that allow for a range of evidence to be used, they are not necessarily clear for students to use when wishing to take feedback and apply it to their future learning, so this is where a learning-focused rubric created for the module/programme is useful. It can point to overall strategies that might be useful for future modules, but it's likely to be generalized and unspecific, for example:

'Be more critical!', 'Your argument needs to be more academic', 'More use of analysis would have helped', 'You need to think carefully about your structure' (Higgins, 2000: 1).

→ PRINCIPLE

It is important to think carefully about how you approach anonymous marking and be cognizant of just how it will impact your practice, because where marking is anonymous it becomes difficult to include feedback that links to previous learning/assessment.

We all have a tendency to write these kinds of comments and expect that students know what we want from them, but is this realistic? A strategy to challenge this is to ask students to submit their own self-assessment (still anonymous) with their assignment that assesses their work in relation to the criteria, as well as to the ways in which they think they have improved aspects of their academic practice.

Developing some form of self-assessment gives the assessor insights into the student's learning that can be reflected in the feedback (e.g. Table 5). Students should be encouraged to use

the My Feedback tools in Moodle to look at their progress, to see where they can develop particular skills, knowledge, etc., and to see where they are achieving well.

The purpose of feedback in formative assessment relates to the improvement of their work and learning in the future. Work submitted for formative feedback need not be anonymous. The extent to which the feedback can direct the student to adapt their future work is important. This feedback is often at its best when it is focused on goals and outcomes but also linked to individual student work and progress (ipsative). For those students who are doing less well it is often better to follow up with dialogue, which can more specifically explain and model possible strategies for improvement.

Key to the success of feedback that is formative is the way in which students are active and engaged in their own learning, so that they are developing their own skills to self-assess and are able to discern the extent to which their own work reaches the standards and levels to which they aspire. See the UCL resources at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/teaching-toolkits/assessment-feedback>

→ PRACTICE

Inviting students to submit two or three questions that allow them to direct feedback toward specific questions of their choice can be helpful in giving students greater ownership of the feedback they receive. For example, 'when you submit your draft for formative assessment please include up to two questions (using the comment feature alongside your text) asking for clarification or feedback related to specific points or sections of your work'.

For more ideas, see Section 1, *Summary of Good Assessment Practice*.

Table 5: Self-assessment rubric model

| Module criteria | Strengths | Area of challenge | Recent strategies used | Perceptions of my own improvements |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Grasp of knowledge | | | | |
| Concepts | | | | |
| Use of literature | | | | |
| Academic writing | | | | |
| Fluency | | | | |
| Argument | | | | |
| Structure | | | | |

UCL case study

Taking a focused and informed approach to developing feedback can considerably enhance students' perceptions of feedback and how they understand its benefits. Dr Garaway (senior lecturer in anthropology at UCL) says:

'Critical to the success of the approach were the tangible improvements we made. But it was also very much about the management of student expectations and constant dialogue with them about what they felt was needed and what was being done.'

Read more about Dr Garaway's ideas on the UCL website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2018/>



Section 8:
Ensuring equity in assessment



Ensuring equity in assessment

There is a difference between assessing all students in the same way in relation to specific learning outcomes and making sure assessments are *appropriate and inclusive* of all students. It is vital that the design and use of assessments are responsive to the diverse nature of students at UCL. Research (see for example, Francis and Skelton, 2009⁶, Conrad and Gasman, 2015⁷) has identified a range of variables such as gender, ethnicity, ability and socio-economic status, all of which are likely to affect how a student performs in assessment. For example, UCL is a genuinely international university and over the past decade has seen a significant increase in students from across the globe applying to come and study here. This change in the nature of our student cohorts brings the issue of equity in relation to assessment further to the fore. In order for our assessments to be valid, staff need to be aware of how well (or not) students from other countries understand our practice.

→ PRACTICE

‘Does our assessment practice reflect the diversity of our students?’

This question often provokes concern, but it is meant to reflect the emphasis on standards that is required in order to ensure our processes are open and fair.

In the past two decades, one of the most influential policy decisions for universities in England has been that of widening participation (Naidoo et al., 2011⁸), making HE more accessible to more people (see UCL’s widening participation agenda). This initiative has seen a change in *who* attends university and more students now hail from under-represented groups within the population, particularly people with disabilities, people from less advantaged socio-economic groups; and people from specific ethnic minorities.⁹

To ensure that we can confidently claim equity in our assessment, it is important to understand and follow the regulatory guidance for our institution.

→ PRINCIPLE

We can only assure students of a socially just and equitable environment if we treat them appropriately. As with all arguments on justice, treating students the same way is not necessarily treating them equitably. Therefore, how we approach assessment and the way that we educate for assessment literacy is very important not simply for adhering to regulatory processes, but also to invoke trust in our work.

If assessment is recognized as a valid means to shape students’ learning, then we, as responsible educators, should understand how assessment also shapes our students and ourselves. Carless (2015: 19) encapsulates this when he states: ‘Openness in assessment is a major means of enhancing perceptions of fairness in assessment. It involves dialogue with students in supporting them to understand various issues, including the rationale for assessment tasks; unpacking the criteria on which they will be assessed and how academic judgments are made; and clarifying the multiple purposes of feedback and how these can support their development of appropriate learning outcomes.’

Equity Issues

The range of writing on equity in assessment is a rapidly evolving area and these two items provide a UK-based and internationally themed examination of key issues in making assessment fair, accessible and well understood.

⁶ Francis, B. and Skelton, C. (2009) *The gendered subjectivities of high-achieving pupils: Full Research Report*. ESRC End of Award Report, RES-062-23-0462. Swindon: ESRC.

⁷ Conrad, C. and Gasman, M. (2015) *Educating a diverse nation: Lessons from Minority Serving Institutions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁸ <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/widening-participation/wp-home>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-rates-in-higher-education-2006-to-2016>

Section 9:
Assessment resource bank



Why do we need to use different types of assessment?

There are many reasons to use varying types; you might wish in doing so to:

- Allow students to demonstrate their skills across many different platforms and challenge the students academically
- Ensure students can demonstrate their skills in the most industrially appropriate way
- Improve engagement
- Allow the lecturer to experiment and use their own expertise
- Ensure academic integrity
- Encourage students to apply critical thought to different mediums
- Helps students to develop a wide range of research skills and connect areas of thought that may not usually be connected.

Choosing the right platform for assignments

Deciding on which platform to use to host your assignment can be daunting. E-Learning staff at UCL have created a tool to help you decide if the platform you wish to use is appropriate: <https://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/MoodleResourceCentre/Choosing+the+right+assessment+platform+for+assignments+-+a+comparison>

UCL assessment practice

UCL assessment practices follow much the same trend as other universities, however they differ slightly in their objective to connect research and teaching through the 'Connected Curriculum', putting research and enquiry at the forefront of teaching, learning and assessment.

The specifics of the 'Connected Curriculum' can be found here <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-initiatives/connected-curriculum>

The specifics of UCL assessment guidelines can be found in more detail in the academic handbook <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c4/principles>



(i) Individual assessments

Annotated bibliography

What is it?

An annotated bibliography is a reference list where the student has added extra information on each reference given. Usually, this extra information will summarise and critically explore the reference it concerns. Though the norm is for the extra information to take the form of a short paragraph, it may take many different forms depending on the specific requirements laid out in the assessment criteria. For example, the assessment criteria may state that the information should be presented in bullet points, as audio files, etc.

Where should it be used?

- An annotated bibliography should be used where you would like a student to explore articles or texts in depth.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- It allows students to explore articles in depth and evaluate their merit fully.
- It motivates students to read through whole articles, rather than skimming through and only drawing on key points.
- It encourages students to consider methodology and how it impacts upon conclusions formed.
- Students are encouraged to access a wide range of source material.
- This is a well-established assessment method and there is a wealth of support material available online.

- Students do not develop the skills to write extended critical text.
- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment, so more time will be needed to set out the expectations of the assignment.

What will this assessment lead to?

This assessment type is particularly useful when helping students develop critical reasoning skills, and an ability to evaluate the work of others. Accordingly, it will help prepare them for essay writing and for dissertations as well as future research work. It will also help them develop understanding of the many approaches that may be used to address a particular subject in their chosen field.

Putting it into practice

There are several things that you must consider when deciding to use an annotated bibliography as an assessment method:

- Will you provide the references, or will students seek their own?
- Will you give them a specific topic or ask them to consider a wider area of study?
- Will this assessment be stand-alone or lead to a further piece of work, e.g. an essay or presentation?

Example assignment: Write an annotated bibliography exploring modern approaches to DNA analysis. It should contain between 10 and 18 references.

Blog

What is it?

A blog is a website or webpage that is updated by the student throughout a course or assessment period; it details, for example, a learning journey.

Where should it be used?

A blog should be used when you wish the student to develop one idea or concept over an extended period of time. It should be used to help monitor how students have engaged with the material presented and how their views changed as they were presented with new material and ideas.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- You can see how students' ideas have developed over time.
- It encourages students to tackle the course and the issues it raises in small parts, allowing them time to think and reflect on their ideas.
- Students are unable to use the essay writing services to do this type of work for them.
- You can monitor students' progress before final submission and ensure the assignment is being completed appropriately, i.e. that it is not left to the last minute.
- The blog can be used to demonstrate the student's writing skills in future employment applications.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment, so more time will be needed to set out the expectations for the assignment.
- Staff may be unfamiliar with this form of writing.

- Some students may be uncomfortable with this direct style of writing.
- Time needs to be given for both lecturer and students to familiarize themselves with the software required.
- Blogs do not encourage academic language and consequently may not be viewed as academically worthwhile.

What will this assessment lead to?

In updating the blog regularly, the student is forced to complete the assignment in small parts and not wait until shortly before the deadline to complete the work. This practice will help students to develop the skills needed for longer pieces of work, like a dissertation or large project. Many of our students will go on to use blogs and social media as part of their future work, particularly if they are going to engage in further research work. This assessment will give them a concrete example of where they have used these skills when asked about them at interview.

Putting it into practice

There are several things that you must consider when deciding to use a blog as a method for assessment:

- What is the purpose of the blog?
- Will the blog be public or viewable only by you and the student?
- How long will students be expected to use the blog?
- How often will students be expected to update the blog?
- How will you ensure the blogs have academic validity?
- What platform will you host the blog on?
- Is any specialist training needed in order for the students to be able to use the platform?

Example assignment: Using Moodle, create a blog detailing your developing views on the changing educational climate in the wake of the 2016 white paper 'Educational excellence everywhere'. It should make reference to academic sources, the media and any other material you deem relevant to forming your view. You should update the blog at least once a week. It is up to you how long you make each post but, in total, your blog should be 2,000-3,000 words and it should be written over the course of six weeks.

Example Blog Posts

4th December 2016

I have just come across something interesting on the TES message board.

<https://community.tes.com/threads/where-is-education-excellence-everywhere-now.741580/>

People on that blog seem really angry about it. They keep talking about education being turned into a business. I think this is something I could explore in academic journals. The article is a little bit old. There doesn't seem to be much else on it. I wonder why there hasn't been any further discussion on this?

8th January 2017

I looked up education institutions being turned into businesses and I have discovered this thing called 'neoliberalism.' Having searched a little more, I discovered that lots of the articles in this area look at league tables, etc. Going to go to the library and take out a book on neoliberalism.

Marking the blog

You may wish to mark the blog in several ways:

- You might wish to create a feedback sheet
 - Your department will likely already have a sheet with a set format on which you can write your feedback.
- You may wish to annotate and mark directly on the blog posts
 - Contact your departmental E-Learning team for more information on how to do this.

Useful free software

There are many websites that will host free blogs – and you can keep them secure so you manage who can see what you post and who can respond. The following are some suggestions but there may be others that are more appropriate to your field:

WordPress.com

WordPress.com offers a basic blog hosting service for free. You can purchase additional options like a custom domain name, additional storage, and other premium services.

Blogger

Blogger is a free blog hosting service. It offers a quick and easy way to create a blog for non-tech-savvy users. It requires little technical knowledge and has the added advantage of Google's robust secure platform and reliability.

Tumblr

Tumblr is a microblogging platform with social networking features including following other blogs, re-blogging, built-in sharing tools, and more.

Medium

An easy-to-use blogging platform with limited social networking features. No setup is required, and no coding skills are needed. It allows you to reach an existing online community of people posting about similar research or projects.

Course report

What is it?

A course report is a selection of notes an academic will make during a student's study, usually over the course of the module. Usually, this report will consider the student's input in the lectures and/or seminars. It may take several forms, from short written notes to a tick box sheet.

Where should it be used?

A course report is particularly useful where you want to consider how a student's ideas have developed over an extended period of time. It should also be used when you want to consider how a student voices those ideas when in a group setting.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students will likely be familiar with this form of assessment as it is similar to the school reports they will have received in their previous education.
- It is a developmental and comparative form of continuous assessment.
- It encourages staff to familiarize themselves with their students' engagement and learning.
- It provides contemporaneous evidence of a student's engagement with their subject and their peers.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Course reports may lack objectivity and cannot be used as a sole method of assessment.
- They can be time consuming to complete.
- It is difficult to quantify progress.

What will this assessment lead to?

This method of assessment allows the lecturer to provide feedback to students on behaviours and attitudes as well as academic engagement. This type of continuous assessment/appraisal will prepare students for the workplace as well as enabling them to reflect on improvements they could make to assist their academic progress.

Putting it into practice

There are several things you need to consider when deciding to use this method of assessment:

- What kind of approach should you take to the course report?
- Does your department already have a standard format for this kind of assessment?
- Will this course report be completed by one lecturer or multiple members of staff?

Dissertation

What is it?

A dissertation is a large body of work usually completed at the end of a programme of study. The word dissertation comes from the Latin '*dissertare*', which means 'to debate'. A dissertation is therefore not just a written article examining a particular subject, but rather a review of different points of view about the subject. It should also include original research, which may be designed to test hypotheses and to further understanding of the topic.

Where should it be used?

A dissertation should be used where a student needs to produce a significant piece of work to demonstrate their ability to conduct original research and communicate findings and conclusions.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Dissertations are a well-established and well-understood method of assessment.
- Many books and online resources are available, tailored by subject area, to help students.
- They encourage students to plan and organize their work.
- They require sustained in-depth research and the application of analytical thought.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- The emergence of essay-writing services, which undermine academic integrity.
 - This form of plagiarism is increasing rapidly and is unlikely to be spotted by the plagiarism software currently in place.

- They are labour intensive for both the student and lecturer.
- The submission requirements and process can be onerous.
- They are not reflective of real research practices, which are generally more collaborative in nature.
- Students can focus too much on the word count at the expense of high-quality content.

What will this assessment lead to?

Dissertations usually mark the end of a student's degree. This assessment type will provide the student with in-depth knowledge of a subject that may be helpful in seeking employment.

Putting it into practice

These are the things you need to consider when using dissertations as a method for assessment:

- Are there departmental rules that need to be followed for presentation, citation, etc.?
- How will dissertation staff be allocated?

Essay

What is it?

An essay is a written text exploring a particular subject. Usually, there will be an argument or point the author is trying to convey. Ideally, they will attempt to do so with a non-biased approach, sourcing information from a variety of sources, both in support of the argument and countering it.

Where should it be used?

An essay should be used to explore a topic and allow students to practice academic research and writing. Through the course of a programme, essay writing can allow the student's style to mature, preparing them for their dissertation.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Many books and online resources are available, tailored by subject area, to help students.
- There has been a large body of research exploring best practice in this area that staff can draw on.
- Students are generally familiar with this type of assessment.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- The emergence of essay-writing services, which undermine academic integrity.
 - This form of plagiarism is increasing rapidly and is unlikely to be spotted by the plagiarism software currently in place.
- Students may be more focused on the word count than the quality of the content.

What will this assessment lead to?

Essays will develop the critical skills needed for larger pieces of work, for instance a dissertation. They will help develop the comprehension, analytical and writing skills needed for future employment as well as introducing ideas that may be helpful in both job applications and interviews.

Putting it into practice

When setting an essay assignment you may find it helpful to check that students have a good understanding of how to plan and present their work. Some training in, for example, mind mapping of ideas may help students to achieve a more successful outcome.

Useful free software

Grammarly <https://www.grammarly.com> – Free proof reading, spell checking and grammar extension for the student's web browser.

UCL study skills pages <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/transition/study-skills-resources>

Exercise/task (structured)

What is it?

An exercise or task set by the examiner will help determine the student's aptitude. Exercises and tasks vary from subject to subject and from examiner to examiner. For example, field work provides an opportunity for assessed on-site work on a project in a context relating to the subject.

Where should it be used?

Exercise or task assessment (structured) should be used in situations where practical skills as well as knowledge need to be tested.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students will likely be used to assessment in this format, as they will likely have experienced it during their previous schooling.
- It can benefit students who may find written work challenging.
- It can help students to develop soft skills.
- The structured nature of the task allows the student to focus on what has to be done.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- It may discourage independent thought and action.
- It can be time consuming to set up and monitor.

What will this assessment lead to?

This type of exercise can be useful in helping the student to understand the planning process required to achieve an outcome.

Putting it into practice

When setting an exercise or task (structured), there are a number of things to consider:

- Is the assignment well planned?
- Is the intended outcome clear?
- Are there any external factors that could influence the success or otherwise of the assignment?
- Are there any institutional or departmental policies to be considered – e.g. health and safety?

Example assignment: Develop a story-based resource suitable for a class of 7-year-olds. You will need to submit your design proposal and rationale, the completed resource and an assessment of how successful it is.

Lab notebook

What is it?

A lab notebook is a primary method of research – for example, the physical paper that chemists use to write down their results in the lab. It is used by researchers as a memory aid, an organizational tool and to document their experiments, hypotheses and initial analysis.

Where should it be used?

A lab notebook can be used to assess the development of critical thinking and to document the sources used to support that development.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students will develop good working habits and have time to reflect on their findings.
- This type of assessment reflects practices in many different research fields and will be a useful example to support students' future employment applications.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment, so more time will be needed to set out the expectations for the assignment.
- Handwritten notes may be difficult to read.
- It may be difficult to verify the content (i.e. where the ideas came from and when the notes were actually written!).

What will this assessment lead to?

This assessment type will further a student's understanding of scientific method and therefore help them to secure employment or further study opportunities in this field.

Putting it into practice

When setting a lab notebook there are a number of things to consider:

- Will this be a stand-alone assessment or will it be used in conjunction with another assessment type?
- Will this be handwritten or typed?
- Is the topic of study appropriate for a lab notebook?
- Does a set format already exist in my field for this?
- How often will I check that students are completing this work appropriately?



Literature review

What is it?

A literature review is a secondary source, as it does not propose any new or original experimental work. It includes findings relevant to a particular topic, as well as pre-existing theoretical and methodical ideas.

Where should it be used?

A literature review can be used to provide a broad grounding, especially in a new topic. It allows the lecturer to check the breadth and depth of a student's engagement with the literature and to discuss other avenues for exploration. It supports the development of critical thinking.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- It allows students to explore articles in depth and evaluate their merit fully.
- It encourages students to read through whole articles, rather than skimming through and only drawing on key points.
- It encourages students to develop their critical reasoning skills.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students may be discouraged from reading peripheral material that may be helpful to their understanding of a topic.
- Students may rely on summaries of relevant literature found online rather than engaging with the original text in depth.
- Students may focus on the number of sources required rather than the quality and relevance of those sources.

What will this assessment lead to?

Engaging with academic texts will help the students to develop their own writing style and to understand the level of critical thought required for future work. A literature review can expose the student to new ideas and helps them to identify gaps in research and recognize future opportunities.

Putting it into practice

Consider how open-ended the assignment should be. Should you set a number of sources to be included or leave this for the student to determine?

Useful free software

Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.co.uk/>

UCL IOE Library literature review guide: <http://libguides.ioe.ac.uk/c.php?g=482220&p=3298043>

Multiple-choice questions

What is it?

Multiple-choice questions are a method of assessment where a candidate is tasked with selecting the right answer (or answers) from a list of incorrect answers. It may be taken in timed conditions, as part of a formal examination, or in an informal setting.

Where should it be used?

At the basic level, multiple-choice questions can be used to check knowledge. More complex versions of multiple-choice questions may also be used to test higher level thinking, especially where answers are similar but only one is actually correct.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- It can save considerable time when marking, as it can be set to mark automatically.
- Tests can be randomized so no two students get the same questions in the same order, making cheating harder.
- They allow the full range of a course to be tested.
- In some circumstances, students can get the results of their test instantly.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students may not engage with them in a serious way.
- Students may not be encouraged to check the correct answers or understand why they were wrong.
- They are easy to assess but can be very hard to set.

- Correct answers may be the result of guesswork.

What will this assessment lead to?

Using multiple-choice questions is a reliable way to run checks on student knowledge and can provide a more relaxed, quiz-like feature to your teaching. Such a test demands quick thinking, decision making and (sometimes) using strategies to gauge the best answer when one is unsure.

Putting it into practice

- Head teacher, Joe Kirby's (2018) blog (<https://pragmaticreform.wordpress.com/2014/03/08/whymcqs/>) provides some useful guidance for MCQ.
 - increase the number of questions (not just 1 or 2 but 10 or 20)
 - increase the number of options (not just 4, a 25 per cent chance of correct guessing, but 5, a 20 per cent chance, or 6, a 16 per cent chance of correct guessing)
 - have a high pass mark – increase it from 70 per cent to 80 or 90 per cent
 - have a penalty for incorrect answers – lose a mark for every wrong answer.

Useful free software

Sporcle <https://www.sporcle.com>

Online Quiz Creator
<https://www.onlinequizcreator.com/>

ISpring Free quiz maker
<https://www.ispringsolutions.com/free-quiz-maker>

Sourceforge.net Savsoft Quiz version 3.0
<https://sourceforge.net/projects/savsoft-quiz-v3-0/?source=directory>

Open book examination / open note examination

What is it?

Open book examinations allow the candidate access to their previous resources on a particular subject. The examinations are still timed and usually supervised. The extent of notes and resources the student has access to is decided by the lecturer in advance of the assessment, and should be communicated to the student in advance.

Where should it be used?

Open book examinations should be used where there is a large range of complex information and data that needs to be mastered in order to demonstrate an understanding of an area of study. Students will still need to have a thorough knowledge of the information, how to use it and where to find it.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students must be familiar with the material in order to use it effectively.
- Students with poor memories are not disadvantaged.
- It reduces the relative value of cheating.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students will generally be unfamiliar with this method of assessment and may need guidance to prepare adequately for it.
- It may be seen as having less academic value than other methods.

What will this assessment lead to?

This method of assessment can develop skills relating to the organization of large quantities of information and the ability to identify key data quickly and accurately. It will help the student to prepare for a dissertation and develop a useful skill for future work.

Putting it into practice

There may be departmental policies or practices to consider when setting an open book/open notes assessment.

See also <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/why-open-book-tests-deserve-a-place-in-your-courses/>

Oral examination

What is it?

An oral examination is an assessment conducted through speech. The candidate may propose an argument and then provide evidence to prove or disprove it, while the examiner is allowed to discuss, debate and ask further questions.

Where should it be used?

An oral examination can be used to assess the student's engagement with a topic, to explore their thinking and assist with the development of new ideas or avenues of research.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- It encourages students to prepare thoroughly for assessment.
- It allows for the assessment of higher-level thinking without the potential barrier of written communication.
- It benefits students who may find written work challenging.
- It can encourage students to develop confidence in speaking and discussing ideas.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Nervous students may not perform well in such an environment.
- This method of assessment may be unfamiliar to students and they may need support to prepare adequately to meet expectations.

- Students who have memory problems may be disadvantaged.
- The lecturer needs to be able to record their assessment. This may impede the flow of the oral examination.
- The assessment may be affected by a range of factors (e.g. unconscious bias, uncongenial environment, etc.).

What will this assessment lead to?

Oral examination of knowledge and ideas encourages confidence and is good preparation for further academic study and work. It supports students to form their thoughts into clear communications and to present ideas cogently to an audience. This will aid them when giving presentations and when attending work-related interviews.

Putting it into practice

There are several things to consider when setting an oral examination:

- You need to establish how and where the examination is to be conducted.
- How will you measure the quality of the responses?
- How will any recording be used?
- Make sure you use open questions and positive body language, including eye contact, to show you are listening.

Example questions (remember who, what, when, where, why and how – in no particular order)

Let's explore the topic you have chosen (XXXX). What made you want to research this?

Why is that point relevant?

Who else has written on this topic?

When did this topic first start to have an impact?

How have you conducted your data collection?

Why is this important to you?

Useful free software

Audacity <https://www.audacityteam.org> – Free open-source recording software, compatible with Linux, Mac and Windows. User friendly, with facilities to export and compress files easily.

There are various mobile apps available that can record in mp3 format for export.

Check the UCL software database for access to free/subsidized software packages: <http://swdb.ucl.ac.uk/>



Podcast

What is it?

A podcast is a recorded speech, similar to an essay but spoken aloud. The candidate will gather information on a subject and present it in audio form, usually within a given duration.

Where should it be used?

- A podcast can be used to assess how cogently a student is able to synthesize and communicate complex ideas relating to a specific topic.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are less able to use essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.
- It encourages students to focus their argument and avoid waffling.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment so may need support to understand what the expectations are.
- Students may need training to be able to use the appropriate software.
- Staff may be unfamiliar with this form of assessment and be reluctant to use it.
- This form of assessment may be seen as lacking academic rigour.
- There may be a risk of unconscious bias if the student has poor speaking skills.

What will this assessment lead to?

Producing podcasts is a key skill that many employers welcome. This form of assessment will provide examples to which the student may refer in future job applications or interviews. Scripting and voicing a podcast requires both writing and speaking skills; reading a script out loud can help develop a more fluent writing style and thus improve communications skills.

Putting it into practice

You will need to ensure that the students have the necessary training to write, record and edit a podcast.

You may want to ensure they have access to examples so the expectations of them are clear.

Useful free software

Audacity <https://www.audacityteam.org> – Free open-source recording software, compatible with Linux, Mac and Windows. User friendly, with facilities to export and compress files easily.

Portfolio

What is it?

A portfolio is a collection of relevant work on a subject. It allows the candidate to represent their own learning in the way that they choose. It is a demonstration of how the student connects the items they compile with the given subject.

Where should it be used?

A portfolio can be used to show the development of ideas and skills over a period of time. It may be used to demonstrate a student's capabilities to future employers. It can be a collection of work on several topics or a single topic.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Progress may be monitored at given stages during a course.
- A range of materials may be included in a portfolio.
- Students are encouraged to plan and organize their work.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- They require continuous motivation from students.
- Marking can be extremely time consuming.
- It is possible to plagiarize elements of a portfolio.
- The initial marks for a portfolio may not reflect the final quality of work of which the student is capable.

What will this assessment lead to?

A portfolio of work can demonstrate range and development over time. It may be a useful tangible demonstration of skills and knowledge for future employers. A portfolio assessment requires high levels of organization on the part of the student as well as the motivation to keep developing it throughout the programme.

Putting it into practice

There may be UCL or departmental policies relating to portfolio assessment. Other points to consider:

- Ensure that the purpose and presentation of the portfolio is clearly understood.
- Set a schedule for monitoring progress and a final deadline for submission.

Useful free software

Try UCL's My Portfolio software:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/digital-education/myportfolio>

Practical examination

What is it?

A practical examination is an examination of a candidate's practical skills. For example, a chemistry practical examination may involve a supervised experiment, where the candidate's method and practises are assessed.

Where should it be used?

Practicals, by their nature, are for situations where a student cannot demonstrate their knowledge, skills, etc., by a conventional form of assessment such as writing or speaking.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- It provides assurance that evidence is authentic, valid and current.
- The student might be able to do this assessment in their usual study place, e.g. a laboratory or a dance studio.
- Students illustrate competence through reference to/use of facilities and resources.
- It is a vital method for some high-risk activities and roles (e.g. a surgeon).

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- They can be time-pressured and stressful for the student.
- They require a specific place to be available and may require specialist equipment.

What will this assessment lead to?

Practical assessments allow students to develop skills that will be vital in future study and the workplace.

Putting it into practice

- Be sure that students are clear about just when and how a practical assessment will work.
- Be vigilant for students soliciting help or being given assistance.
- Think carefully about how you will mark a practical assessment – and be sure your student understands those criteria as opposed to the ones that may be used for other assessments.



Reflective writing

What is it?

Reflective writing involves producing an analytical written piece in which the candidate describes an event or idea, thinking in depth and from differing perspectives, and trying to analyse the item, often referencing a previous model or theory on the subject.

Where should it be used?

Reflective journals can be used in any learning setting – there is no definitive design; rather it is good to get students thinking about how to reflect on their work in short and longer bursts. This might range from a single Post-it Note idea through to 20 minutes of focused writing. The important point is to ensure that students think about what they have learned from whatever experience they are recording.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Writing can enhance problem-solving skills, so as students write more they begin to see new ways to explore issues and ideas. This can help further develop their academic writing skills.
- If tutors read the journals, or excerpts, with students, they can gain a good idea of how a student is progressing and where changes/support are needed.
- Encourages autonomous learning – and increased learner autonomy.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students can be put off by the idea of writing a 'diary'.
- Objective marking is difficult as the reflective journal might be a personal, narrative tool – specific criteria need to be established and shared.

What will this assessment lead to?

Increased opportunities to write will enhance students, overall writing skills and provides a strong model for reflection/problem-solving that is transferable to other contexts.

Putting it into practice

Research suggests that weekly or monthly opportunities to reflect on work are the most effective. Having a regular focus ensures motivation to keep going is enhanced and students can 'see' where they are changing/progressing. Objective and well-targeted feedback is essential to encourage and motivate students.

Useful free software

Penzu has a range of e-journals if you prefer that over a diary style notebook: <https://penzu.com/reflective-journal-template>

Research plan/proposal

What is it?

A research plan is a proposed idea for a study (or gathering of research) on a particular subject. The proposal should cover what questions will be asked and how, any prior research that has taken place on the subject, how the results will be evaluated and how much time the process will take.

Where should it be used?

A research plan should be used to prepare for a larger piece of work such as an essay, presentation or dissertation.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are encouraged to develop planning skills to support larger pieces of work.
- Lecturers are able to ensure students have a sound foundation for proposed work.
- Variants on the research proposal can help prepare students for future employment.
- Students are unable to use the essay writing services to do this type of work.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are discouraged from exploring the peripherals of a topic.
- In a culture driven by results, the research proposal may not be viewed as being as important as the final research and so students may be less motivated to complete it thoroughly.

What will this assessment lead to?

Developing skills in the planning and organization of projects will help students in future academic work and in employment. Producing research plans/proposals will give students a clear understanding of the scope of work to be undertaken and enable them to plan their approach accordingly.

Putting it into practice

You should consider the following when planning to set a research plan/proposal:

- Is there a standard format used by your department or industry?
- What kind of framework will students be expected to work to – e.g. number of words, range of sources, etc.
- How will the plan/proposal be presented and to whom?
- What criteria will be used for grading the assessment?
- Is this a stand-alone assessment or will it be graded in conjunction with the full research project?
- What revisions will be permitted in order to ensure the success of any research based on this plan or proposal?

Seen examination

What is it?

A seen examination is a time-constrained task where the task is presented to the candidate prior to the date of assessment. The exam itself is still performed under strict conditions, with no external material allowed into the examination room.

Where should it be used?

A seen examination should be used where a student needs time to develop ideas and prepare arguments but where there is also a need to demonstrate the ability to remember the details of those ideas.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are able to apply a more focussed approach to their revision, allowing them to have developed clear lines of thought before entering the examination room.
- It encourages students to develop understanding and memory of key subjects.
- It develops students' ability to work in a pressured environment.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- It can encourage rote learning rather than deep learning.
- Students may be unfamiliar with this type of exam as it is not common in many school systems.
- Depending on the lead time available, students may be tempted to use an essay-writing service and memorize the essay rather than exploring the topic themselves.

What will this assessment lead to?

This form of assessment is often used by professional organizations to assess students for their suitability for membership.

Putting it into practice

There are several things you should consider when setting a seen examination:

- Clarify the university or departmental standard format for this type of assessment.
- Do relevant professional bodies have their own preferred approach?
- How much lead time should be given before the timed element of the assessment?
- Have you ensured students have had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with focused research and recall?

Unseen examination

What is it?

An unseen examination is one where the candidate has no prior knowledge of the precise questions that will be set. The assessment is timed, supervised and no external sources of information are allowed in the examination.

Where should it be used?

An unseen examination should be used where there is a need to test students' knowledge on a subject or a skill set they have acquired during the course of their studies.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are likely to be familiar with this form of examination.
- It develops students' ability to work in a pressured environment.
- It encourages students to develop understanding and memory of key subjects.
- It benefits students who prefer short timescales for work.
- It provides incentives for students to revisit work and ideas.
- It can be assessed against a rubric.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students have limited time to think reflectively on their work.
- Few industries require employees to write on a topic without reference to external source material, and thus it does not reflect standard industry practice.
- The stress caused can inhibit students from showing their true ability.
- Encourages cramming and discourages consistent work across the course of study.
- Can disadvantage students who require particular accommodations.

What will this assessment lead to?

This form of assessment is often used by professional organizations to assess students for their suitability for membership (e.g. registration to practice clinical psychology: <http://www.hpc-uk.org/apply/uk/>).

Putting it into practice

There are several things you should consider when setting an unseen examination:

- Is there a university or departmental standard format for this type of assessment?
- Do relevant professional bodies have their own preferred approach?
- How much of the syllabus will be tested in this examination? Will different areas of the syllabus be split into different papers?
- Have you ensured students have had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with focused research and recall?

Video report

What is it?

A video report is a presentation via video (and often audio) on a particular subject. The report will take on a structured narrative similar to that of an essay, but with the evidence, analysis and conclusions all taking place in video format.

Where should it be used?

Video assessment should be used where critical thought needs to be demonstrated beyond the standard written format. It is particularly useful for assessing how students are able to portray complex ideas in accessible ways and for students likely to use video technology in their future careers.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- This form of assessment is not reliant on students having strong written English.
- It allows students to demonstrate creative approaches to exploring ideas.
- Video technology is increasingly being used in many areas of industry and thus it develops useful skills for future employment.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment and thus more time will be needed to explain the expectations.
- Shy/introverted students may find this assessment method particularly challenging.
- Extra care needs to be taken to ensure that this assessment is as academically rigorous as other forms of assessment, and that sources are properly cited.

- Time must be given for students and lecturers to familiarize themselves with the software and hardware they will be using.
- Students may focus more on the production techniques than the content.

What will this assessment lead to?

A video report will lead to the development of further critical skills and may be useful for future academic projects as well as future employment.

Putting it into practice

There are several things you should consider when setting a video report:

- Is it clear what is being assessed (i.e. the content rather than the production techniques)?
- Will students need to complete the entire video themselves or may they have support with filming and editing?
- Are students familiar with the software and hardware they will be using?
- What basic technical standards should be achieved (e.g. audibility)?

Useful free software

Audacity <https://www.audacityteam.org> – Free open-source recording software, compatible with Linux, Mac and Windows. User friendly, with facilities to export and compress files easily.

Creative Commons <https://creativecommons.org> – catalogue of licence-free music and audio that can be used in presentations. Facility to download audio files from the internet.

OpenShot <https://www.openshot.org> – free video editing software, compatible with Mac, Linux and Windows.

Windows (Movie Maker) or Mac (iMovie) – free inbuilt software for Windows / Mac devices, basic and easy-to-use video editors.

(ii) GROUP ASSESSMENTS

What is a group assessment?

A group assessment is one that requires a student to work with their peers to produce a piece of work. Group assessments can be used in conjunction with individual assessment practices, or as stand-alone assessments. They can be used both in formative and in summative assessments. There is a useful body of research at UCL on group assessments – see the IPAC Project Wiki: <https://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?spaceKey=IC&title=IPAC>

Key issues that span all group assessments relate to the way in which the grades or marks awarded accurately reflect individual students' contributions. There must be a strategy to ensure that all those in the group have participated, even though their roles and contributions may be different. Good strategies often include requiring a log to be submitted that documents the involvement of the group and is signed by all members. There must be a recognized mechanism through which members of the group can discuss concerns about their team with university staff.

Consideration should be given to the proportion of the total module (and/or programme) grade that group assessments will account for. Currently, UCL regulations require that the grading and moderation of group work be clearly stated in all published course materials if it is going to be used as part of the assessment in any module or programme – see Academic Regulations on Assessment: 2.2 Assessment for Students 3 (d).

Issues to be aware of with group assessment

There is evidence that students who typically get lower marks in individual assessments may gain higher grades from group assessments and, conversely, that higher-performing students might gain slightly lower grades than they usually do. On this basis, group assessment should not generally account for more than 50 per cent of the grade for any course or module. Typically, they account for no more than 30 per cent.

Outlined below are some examples of types of group assessment that you are likely to encounter. There are many variations on these and they will need to be adapted to fit the particular academic purpose for which they are used. The following approaches are covered:

- Group presentation
- Group project/report
- Peer review
- Wiki



Group presentation

What is it?

A group presentation where two or more students work collaboratively to present a piece of work. It may be an oral, visual, poster or written presentation.

Where should it be used?

- A group presentation should be used to introduce an inexperienced group of students to presenting or to develop a collaborative approach to work.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students develop teamwork skills that they can refer to in subsequent job interviews.
- Students are able to bounce ideas off each other, using a collaborative approach to increase the understanding and insight of all.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Not every student in the group may have an equal input.
- They can be difficult for the lecturer to assess.
- Group projects may create conflict.
- Students may feel they are unfair.

What will this assessment lead to?

This type of assessment will improve presentation skills that are vital for many future jobs. It will also allow students to give an example of teamwork skills in future interviews.

Putting it into practice

There are several things you should consider when setting a group presentation:

- How you are going to select group members?
- Will you set ground rules for how the groups will operate?
- How will you ensure that each member of each group is contributing sufficiently?
- How will any discord within the groups be managed?

Useful free software

Skype www.skype.com – free communication software, offering audio, video and text-based chat. Ability to share files any time. Group calls and group chats are possible.

Discord <https://discordapp.com> – originally designed for gamers. Similar to Skype but has different features including the ability to form private servers and subgroups.

Dropbox <https://www.dropbox.com> – a cloud-based file sharing website. Dropbox Basic is free, with a limited amount of storage. Students and lecturers can share files and resources with a wide group of people in shared folders that can be accessed anytime through the Dropbox app on computer, tablet or phone.

Taiga <https://taiga.io> – project management software that allows multiple users to access the same material and develop ideas together.

Zoho <https://www.zoho.eu/projects/> – project management software that allows multiple users to access the same material and develop ideas together.

Asana <https://asana.com> – project management software, used mainly by large corporate companies, that allows multiple users to access the same material and develop ideas together.

Group project report

What is it?

A group project report is a log of the entire process of creating a group project. Usually, it is written in conjunction with a group project or presentation.

Where should it be used?

A group project should be used to support an inexperienced group of students to reflect on their project work or to develop a collaborative approach to work. Equally, it should be used where the nature of the project would make it too large for one student to complete within the timescale allocated.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students develop teamwork skills that they can refer to in subsequent job interviews.
- Students are able to bounce ideas off each other, using a collaborative approach to increase the understanding and insight of all.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Not every student in the group may have an equal input.
- They can be difficult for the lecturer to assess.
- Group projects may create conflict.
- Students may feel they are unfair.

What will this assessment lead to?

This assessment type will lead to students being able to complete project reports individually and understanding the steps needed for project completion. It will help students to develop self-reflection. It will also allow students to demonstrate where they have worked collaboratively in future interviews.

Putting it into practice

When setting a group project report, there are a number of things to consider:

- What other assessment type will this be used in conjunction with?
- How will you ensure students are doing their fair share of the work?
- Will the students be marked for their individual contribution or will the group be viewed as a whole?
- Does a set format already exist in your field for this?
- How often will I check that students are completing this work appropriately?

Useful free software

Asana – <https://asana.com>

Taiga – <https://taiga.io>

Zoho – <https://www.zoho.eu/projects/>

Peer review exercises

What is it?

A peer review exercise is one in which students review each other's work and have a critical dialogue concerning it.

Where should it be used?

Peer review exercises should be used where there is a need to develop collaborative skills within a group or where students need to develop the ability to manage criticism from their peers.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are able to bounce ideas off each other, using a collaborative approach to increase the understanding and insight of all.
- By applying critical reasoning to others' work, students are able to develop a sense of their own academic strengths and weaknesses.
- This prepares students for future employment as peer review is a standard part of many academic and industry jobs.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize.

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment and so more time will be needed to set out the expectations.
- All students involved in the process need to be fully committed in order to gain advantage from it.
- Students may not be in a position to understand how to support or improve the work of their peers.

What will this assessment lead to?

This assessment will lead to a more collaborative and supportive approach to academic work, needed in many different industries.

Putting it into practice

When setting a peer review exercise, there are a number of things to consider:

- Is the assignment well planned?
- Is the intended outcome clear?
- Are students capable of making informed and constructively critical remarks about another student's work?
- Are there any institution or departmental policies to be considered (e.g. anonymity)?
- Are the students comfortable having their work shared with others?

Wiki

What is it?

A wiki is a website or database developed collaboratively by a community of users, in this case students, allowing any user to add and edit content.

Where should it be used?

A wiki should be used where the topic benefits from the experience of many different students or where students are likely to need to revisit the topic in future.

What are the key advantages of this form of assessment?

- Students are able to bounce ideas off each other, using a collaborative approach to increase the understanding and insight of all.
- Students develop teamwork skills and knowledge of software that they can refer to in subsequent job interviews.
- It reflects the way many industries now share information.
- A digital footprint is kept that can help staff evaluate how and when students are accessing information.
- Students are unable to use the essay-writing services to do this type of work for them, and thus it is harder to plagiarize

What are the key disadvantages of this form of assessment?

- Students engage with wikis differently, some posting frequently and others posting little at all, making it difficult to mark consistently.
- Time must be taken for both the lecturer and the students to familiarize themselves with the platform on which the wiki is hosted.

- Students might be unfamiliar with this form of assessment and so more time will be needed to set out the expectations.

What will this assessment lead to?

Wikis will lead to improved technical competence and allow students to demonstrate where they have worked collaboratively to further a common goal in future interviews.

Putting it into practice

There are several things that you must consider when deciding to use a wiki as a method for assessment:

- What is the purpose of the wiki?
- Will the blog be public or viewable only by you and the students?
- How long will students be expected to use the wiki?
- How often will students be expected to update the wiki?
- How will you ensure each wiki has academic validity?
- What platform will you host the wiki on?
- Is any specialist training needed in order for the students to be able to use the platform?

At UCL, you will find a range of wikis that provide useful information on subjects, teaching and learning and so on. You can access support in developing a wiki for your students, or getting them to develop one for assessments – contact E-Learning for more support.

Useful free software

PB works <https://www.pbworks.com/education.html>

Wiki.js <https://wiki.js.org/>

UCL WIKI
UCL

Confluence
Spaces
Create
Log in

UCL E-Learning Wiki

Pages

Blog

SPACE SHORTCUTS

- UCL E-Learning Champions' Net...
- Welcome to the E-Learning Cha...
- Who are my department's E-Lear...
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Assessment & feedback

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An overview of digital assessment practices which meet UCL expectations.

- Setting up your digital assignment
 - Which technology or platform?
 - What to tell students
 - Be clear about assessment criteria
- Giving students feedback they can use
 - Let students know
 - Help students work with their feedback
 - Feedback only, without numeric marks?
- Further information

Setting up your digital assignment

The Moodle MyFeedback Report helps students engage with feedback by bringing it together in one place. For that to happen, set up your assignments in Moodle and give feedback via those, even if students have not actually submitted anything there.

Which technology or platform?

For essays or file uploads to be marked by staff, Moodle Assignment or Turnitin Assignment.

- To decide between UCL technologies, see 'Choosing the right assessment platform'.
- A further detailed comparison of Moodle Assignment and Turnitin.
- To set up, see our Moodle Resource Centre guides on Moodle Assignment and Turnitin Assignment.
- Contact your School's Digital Education Advisor to discuss settings.
- Generate test Moodle users and try out your setup from a student point-of-view.

For work which will be peer marked, use Moodle Workshop to make the allocations and apply deadlines according to your settings (we don't recommend Turnitin Peermark currently).

For tests (including examinations), Moodle Quiz has a highly configurable range of question types for testing and self-testing, and is good for providing individualised feedback. Students can be involved in setting up their own multiple choice questions using Peerwise: <http://peerwise.cs.auckland.ac.nz>.

For online exhibitions and other web-based work, UCL offers MyPortfolio (Wordpress to come).

Consider setting up all your assignments in Moodle so that the feedback you give displays to students and persona tutors in the Moodle MyFeedback Report.

Giving students feedback they can use

Let students know

Students usually need to be guided to engage with feedback.

- Via the Announcements Forum of that particular Moodle space; students receive these messages by email, and you could enable the Latest News block to display most recent messages on your Moodle area's front page.
- Via social media if you use it. Again, you can display this in a sidebar block on your Moodle area front page.

Help students work with their feedback

- Practical guidance on enacting educational principles with assessment technologies.
- Arena Centre Assessment and Feedback Quickguides.

Feedback only, without numeric marks?

To engage students with feedback, consider temporarily withholding the numeric mark. The Moodle Gradebook lets you multi-upload feedback and marks separately, or you can do this student-by-student if your cohort is smaller.

Feedback-only rubrics? When using Moodle Rubrics, Moodle prompts you for numeric points, but if you want to use your rubric to give feedback without a numeric grade then you set the Rubric to hide numeric marks from students, and set the Gradebook to hide the final calculated grade from students.

(ii) GROUP ASSESSMENTS – WIKI

ACCESSING FURTHER HELP

See the UCL assessment aims and principles (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c4/principles>) and for further UCL-based training: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/teaching-resources/teaching-toolkits/assessment-feedback>

When designing or reviewing a programme, development teams should consider the following:

- Is assessment outward-facing? Does it mirror public engagement in research and encourage communication with external audiences (e.g. journal articles, blogs, presentations, exhibitions or films)?
- Does it facilitate academic and intellectual progression? How?
- Does it ensure that academic and professional standards are achieved?
- Does it enhance and reward qualities that are important to employers?
- Is it inclusive, diverse and designed to assess a range of skills and knowledge (e.g. oral presentations, posters, group work)?
- Does it challenge, stretch and motivate students?
- Does it scaffold students and encourage the development of autonomous learners?
- Does it reflect developments in pedagogy and in new knowledge about assessment?
- Is it spread evenly across a programme, avoiding overload for both students and staff?

Put simply, we refer to our august predecessor, Professor Gordon Stobart, when he captured the important elements of good assessment in just three principal questions:

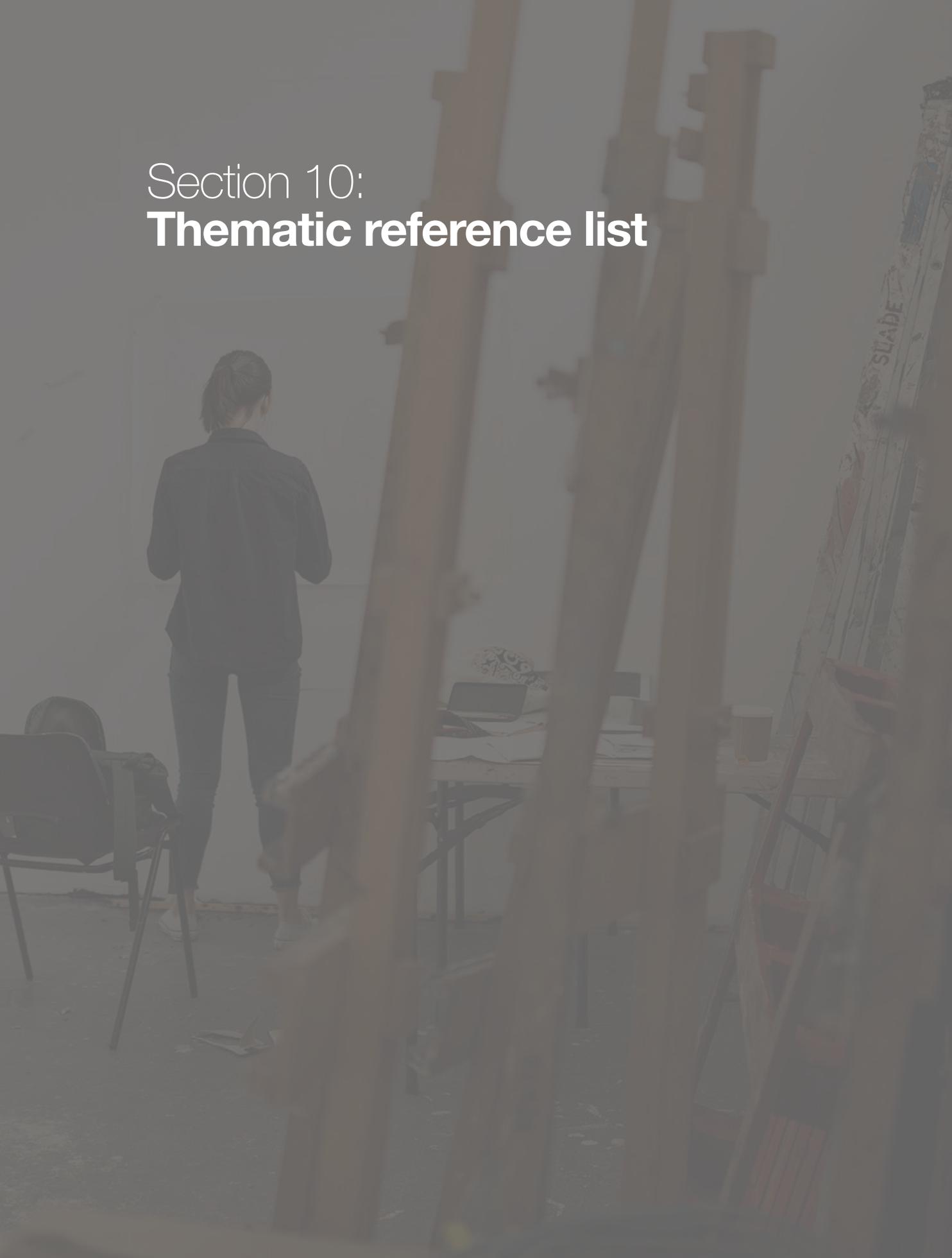
- I. **What is the principal purpose of this assessment?**
- II. **Is the form of the assessment fit for purpose?**
- III. **Does it achieve its purpose?**

If you can answer these three questions and feel confident about your answers, then it's likely that your assessment is the right one... for now.

Endnote from the authors

There is a lot of literature on assessment and our understanding of the domain is improving all the time. UCL provides a great many resources and ideas for how to improve and extend your knowledge so that you can give yourself and your students a great learning experience. It can seem overwhelming, so in Section 10, *Thematic reference list*, which follows, we have endeavoured to create a thematic reference list that outlines key readings as well as the papers we have used to provide evidence for our work here.

Section 10: **Thematic reference list**



THEMATIC REFERENCE LIST

Relationships in HE

Curran, R. and Millard, L. (2016) 'A partnership approach to developing student capacity to engage and staff capacity to be engaging: Opportunities for academic developers', *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21(1), 67-78. doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2015.1120212.

This paper advocates for a partnership approach between student and teachers, and concludes that such an approach is beneficial to both parties. The article suggests ways in which academic staff can alter their own practices in order to facilitate the building of this relationship.

Change in HE

Deneen, C. and Boud, D. (2014) 'Patterns of resistance in managing assessment change', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39(5), 577-591. doi: 10.1080/02602938.2013.859654.

This article explores resistance to change in assessment practice at one Hong Kong university. It found that there was little resistance to reconstructing outcomes and enhancing learning activities. However, there was significant resistance to implementing assessment change. Implementation attempts were often buried and limited feedback was given about those attempts.

Naidoo, R., Shankar, A. and Verr, E. (2011) 'The consumerist turn in higher education: Policy aspirations and outcomes', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11-12), 1142-1162. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2011.609135

The political push to position contemporary students as consumers of higher education is explored in this article. Consumerism is shown to promote passive learning, threaten academic standards, and entrench academic privilege.

Self-regulation and motivation

Nicol, D. (2009) 'Assessment for learner self-regulation: Enhancing achievement in the first year using learning technologies', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(3), 335-352.

This paper looks at the way in which the learning environment in HE needs to support students to be more self-regulating in their own studies, and how the use of feedback and learning technologies, through e-assessment, may facilitate this.

Pintrich, P. R. and Zusho, A. (2002) 'The development of academic self-regulation', in Wigfield, A. and Eccles, J. S. (eds). *Development of Achievement Motivation*, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 249-284. doi: 10.1016/B978-012750053-9/50012-7.

Academic self-regulation is discussed in relation to the cognitive and motivational factors that influence it, particularly self-regulated learning in the classroom setting. The focus is on school-age children and how self-regulation wanes or develops over time.

The uses of assessment

Stobart, G. (2008) *Testing Times: The uses and abuses of assessment*. London: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203930502

This book explores many of the modern uses of educational assessment and questions these uses. It focuses on assessment as a social activity, irrevocably intertwined with culture. It argues that often assessment does not measure knowledge or skill objectively, rather it creates and shapes what is measured. It also argues that assessment influences how, what and why we learn. It can be both a tool to encourage effective learning and a means of undermining the pedagogical process.

Formative assessment

Hughes, G. (2014) *Ipsative Assessment: Motivation through marking progress*. London: Palgrave.

This book offers both a theoretical and practical approach to developing ipsative assessment in HE. It contextualizes practice through a number of case studies and offers a reasoned argument for positioning ipsative assessment alongside other assessment practices.

Nicol, D. J. and Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006) 'Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice', *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199-218. DOI: 10.1080/030757070600572090

This article proposes seven principles of good feedback practices that support students in becoming self-regulated learners. It advocates for a shift in feedback, whereby students take a proactive rather than reactive role in feedback production.

Torrance, H. (2012) 'Formative assessment at the crossroads: Conformative, deformative and transformative assessment', *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(3), 323-342.

This article examines formative assessment in HE, pointing to the ways in which it is often distorted by the demands of summative assessment and tightly focused criteria. It highlights how formative assessment is often seen in technical terms and within a behavioural model of learning, missing what it should be achieving. It ends with an exploration of formative assessment and the extent to which it might enhance more transformative enactments of learning.

Marking

Bloxham, S. (2009), Marking and moderation in the UK: False assumptions and wasted resources, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34:2, 209-220.

A useful critique of marking practice and HE moderation.

Newstead, S. and Dennis, I. (1994), Examiners examined: The reliability of exam marking in psychology, *The Psychologist*, 7, 216-19.

This paper considers important factors in establishing reliable marking practices.

Feedback

Boud, D. and Molloy, E. (2013) Rethinking models of feedback for learning: The challenge of design, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(6). doi: 10.1080/02602938.2012.691462.

This paper explores two different models of feedback. This first model positions the teacher as the driver of feedback. The second model draws on ideas from sustainable assessment. The paper concludes that it is important for students to be given opportunity to develop the skills to operate as judges of their own learning.

Higgins, R. (2000) 'Be more critical: Rethinking assessment feedback', *British Educational Research Association Conference*. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001548.htm>

This paper explores feedback on written coursework in HE. It suggests that feedback is part of a wider social context, involving a complex interplay of power relations, competing discourses, emotion and identity. Understanding feedback as part of this wider social context is viewed as a key element of ensuring clear communication between tutors and students, particularly relating to feedback comments.

Hughes, G., Smith, H. and Cresse, B. (2015) 'Not seeing the wood for the trees: Developing a feedback analysis tool to explore feed forward in modularised programmes', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40(8), 1079-1094.

This focuses on identifying different categories of feedback and understanding what is better for summative and formative feedback. It builds on Orsmond and Merry's 2011 paper on feedback alignment. Where the emphasis is formative, students benefit from feedback that indicates their progress from previous work as well as how they might improve their work in the future.

Nicol, D., Thomson, A. and Breslin, C. (2014) 'Rethinking feedback practices in higher education: A peer review perspective', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39(1), 102-122.

The essence of this paper explores what students gain from giving as well as receiving feedback. It demonstrates that when students give feedback to peers they engage with evaluative judgment, which enhances their own skills in self-assessment in the future.

Orsmond, P. and Merry, S. (2011) 'Feedback alignment: Effective and ineffective links between tutors' students' understanding of coursework feedback', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 26(2), 125-136.

This article examines the different types of feedback that can be used within marking practices and the ways in which students deem them useful.

Summative assessment

Koretz, D. (2008) *Measuring Up: What educational testing really tells us*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

This book is one of the most well-regarded in the field. Its focus is the USA, but it has global relevance. It covers key concepts in summative assessment as well as issues in public confidence in assessment and the inferences that can be appropriately made from summative assessments, particularly tests and examinations.

E-assessment

Gikandi, J. W., Morrow, D. and Davis, N. E. (2011) 'Online formative assessment in higher education: A review of the literature', *Computers and Education*, 57(4), 2333-2351. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2011.06.004.

A comprehensive literature review of online formative assessment in higher education. The authors note that key terms are often used synonymously – particularly e-learning, online, and blended learning, and that the term

'assessment' is being used synonymously with 'evaluation', leading to ambiguity in the literature.

Heinrich, E., Milne, J., Ramsay, A., and Morrison, D. 'Recommendations for the use of e-tools for improvements around assignment marking quality', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(4), 469-479. doi: 10.1080/02602930802071122.

This article looks at the use of e-tools to improve the quality of assignment marking. It shows that e-assessment tools are not currently being used to their full potential. It argues that institutional support and a collegial atmosphere are needed to increase the use of e-tools.

Student assessment

Brown, S. and Race, P. (2013) 'Using effective assessment to promote learning', in Hunt, L. (ed.) *University Teaching in Focus: A learning-centred approach*. London: Routledge, 74-91.

This book chapter provides a succinct overview of how to make your assessment practice more effective. The authors provide clear guidance and ideas for practical ways to improve your teaching to enhance your students' learning.

Gielen, M. and De Wever, B. (2015) 'Structuring the peer assessment process: a multilevel approach for the impact on product improvement and peer feedback quality', *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 31(5), 435-449.

This study investigates how the peer assessment process can have a beneficial effect on students' performance in a wiki environment in first-year higher education.



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