This document aims to support staff to deliver an enhanced assessment process that values assessment for learning.
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**Introduction**

In 2012, the University separated the mandatory aspects of the UH Academic Regulations for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes from the Assessment Principles. The mandatory aspects have been incorporated into UPR AS12 whilst guidance aspects have been aligned with the Assessment-for-Learning Principles.

Further information relating to Academic Quality and the Assessment Regulations can be found in ‘The Periodic Review Handbook’ 2012, please see, http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/aqo.nsf/page/71C89268212482227802573280057A6B9x

**University of Hertfordshire Assessment-for-Learning Principles 2012**

These principles suggest that good practice in Assessment-for-Learning:

1. Engages students with the assessment criteria
2. Supports personalised learning
3. Ensures feedback leads to improvement
4. Focuses on student development
5. Stimulates dialogue
6. Considers student and staff effort

This document aims to support staff to deliver an enhanced assessment process that values assessment for learning. The document has been developed from the pedagogic evidence of assessment for learning principles synthesised (mainly) from the work of Gibbs and Simpson (2004), Nicol (2007) the NUS (2010) and the Weston Manor Group (2007) and the Student Experience Strategy (UH, 2011).

The Assessment-for-Learning principles form part of the Learning and Teaching Institute’s Curriculum Design Toolkit which was developed to help staff review and enhance their teaching practice.
Where you see these symbols you will be signposted to information in the Curriculum Toolkit

http://tinyurl.com/7gmmnu

The following six chapters focus on each of the UH Assessment for Learning Principles. Students across the University who engaged in the development of the principles gave feedback to the development team. Examples of these are highlighted in speech bubbles and by this symbol;

Good assessments create a good educational experience, set out high expectations, foster appropriate study behaviours and stimulate students’ inquisitiveness, motivation and interest for learning.
Good Practice in Assessment-for-Learning:

1. Engages students with the assessment criteria

1.1 Overview

Our interactions with students, through assessment and feedback, should help students engage with the assessment criteria. The criteria should be communicated and written down in clear, easily accessible language, free of jargon, which students can understand, whilst setting high expectations of the learner.

- Good practice ensures that students have an opportunity to use assessment criteria formatively to enable them to understand what their tutors are looking for when marking. Grading Criteria can also help students understand the grade they have been awarded.

- It is essential that students can readily access Grading Criteria for all assessment formats (e.g. essays, group presentations, written examinations etc.) and that these relate to the Academic Levels.

- To ensure consistency and transparency, agreed grading criteria should be published in an appropriate programme/student handbook, based on the Grade Descriptors in UPR AS14, Section D.

- Information provided to students should give specific assessment details indicating which learning outcomes are being assessed by an assessment task.

- The assessment criteria should be valid, fair and consistent for all students e.g. support should be given to those with a disability.

Clear, accurate and timely information on assessment tasks and procedures should be made available to students, staff, external examiners and others as appropriate. Programme/student handbooks (and associated module guides) should provide explicit information about the assessment tasks and associated processes including relevant submission details.

“I link any feedback I receive to the original assessment criteria to support my future learning.”

Student Feedback.
1.2 How to engage students with the assessment criteria

- Set clear criteria and expectations, appropriate to the level of study, that are easily accessible and communicated to the students.

- Provide study support resources identified to help students meet the assessment criteria. e.g. iSPY resources, Maths Drop-In centre, www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/go/asu or http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/LIS.nsf/0/2A4BFF0E73A38B9D802573FD003E3136?opendocument

- Align the assessment to the learning outcomes to ensure students are aware of which elements of the module are being assessed and within which assignment.

- Provide the assessment criteria, well in advance, to help to clarify what good performance looks like (goals, criteria, and standards) so that students understand the standards expected of them.

- Ensure the feedback is linked to the assessment criteria / expected outcomes and links students to ways in which they can use this to support their future learning.

- Engage in peer assessment opportunities so that students have the opportunity to be involved with the assessment criteria e.g. through activities in the classroom that engage students in reviewing the assessment criteria formatively.

**Key points**

**When engaging students ensure that they:**

- understand how the content and assessment are aligned
- know how to achieve a good grade
- feel their learning is relevant
- enjoy the assessment
- can see how they learnt from the assessment
- use their feedback to inform their learning
- have a desire and motivation to do well in the assessment.
Is your module **RED, AMBER OR GREEN** - use the curriculum toolkit to carry out a diagnostic test

http://tinyurl.com/7gmmnmu
Good Practice in *Assessment-for-Learning*:

2. Supports personalised learning

2.1 Overview

Students come to the University at different stages of their own learning development and with their own individual needs. Their course, their motivation and interests all impact on how they will learn and their expectations of the assessment process. Students may have chosen the course they are on, partly because of the assessment processes which suit their individual learning style.

Good assessment is inclusive and fair for all students and aims to support the personalisation of learning through a variety of activities.

In order to provide all students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning, the profile of assessments within a programme should include a range of assessment formats. Good practice ensures that students have variety in the assessments and where possible gives them some individual choice. For example; in the topic of an assessment or in the method/format of the assessment.

Assessment methods and procedures must anticipate the needs of a diverse student body, and in particular must take into account the QAA Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities, and the current equalities legislation (i.e. the Equalities Act 2010). Assessment procedures and methods must be flexible enough to allow adjustments to be made to overcome any substantial disadvantage that individual students could experience.

2.2 Ways to support personalised learning

- identifying where possible a variety of assessment methods that could be used to test particular learning outcomes
- ensuring that an assessment strategy includes a range of assessment formats
- ensuring assessment methods are culturally inclusive
- identifying times that are appropriate for most students and avoiding those, where possible, which are difficult.
Assessment-for-Learning should consider;

- days in a week e.g. Friday afternoons in winter would not be a good time for observant Jewish students
- half-term weeks would not be good for some parents with child-care responsibilities
- specific dates when religious observances preclude students attending
- choosing locations that are accessible for those with mobility difficulties, quiet without background noise and well lit
- providing additional preparation for students who are less familiar with the chosen assessment methods e.g.
  - for students whose previous assessment relied on multiple choice, providing additional guidance/practice in essay-writing before they submit essays for assessment
  - for students unused to working collaboratively in groups assistance in making the group effective

All students who have an identified learning disability will have a ‘study needs agreement’ which will be communicated with module leaders via email from the disability team and identified on the class list by a ‘disabled’ logo. If you have any queries or would like any support please contact Lena Kloos, disabilityservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone: 01707 281338.

Further information can be found on StudyNet; http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/support.nsf/support?ReadForm

It is important to ensure that a short statement is included in programme review/validation documentation to demonstrate that consideration has been given to any unfavourable or unjustified effects of assessment tasks on student groups who may be disadvantaged. Adjustments that the University allows are indicated in UPR AS12 Appendix II.
These include adjustments to:

- the types of assessment, e.g. allowing a written presentation instead of an oral one for a student who has a pronounced speech impediment;
- the timing of the assessment, e.g. allowing extra time for dyslexic students; providing a reader where appropriate, extending deadlines for coursework;
- the location of assessment, e.g. separate room for a student who suffers from panic attacks;
- the support in assessment, e.g. amanuensis or pc with voice recognition software for a student who cannot write or type; providing a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter for a BSL-using student in a viva;

The examples above are not exhaustive; all refer to adjustment to ensure disabled students have equality of opportunity to demonstrate their understanding within assessments.

Assessments should aim to draw on students own personal experiences, where appropriate, allowing them to be creative and respond to their own particular learning style. This will then engage students at a personal level inspire and motivate them. For example; assignments that are obviously relevant and authentic are more likely to engage students than assignments that are too abstract. Likewise, assessment formats that are novel and interesting in themselves will encourage inquisitive enquiry and participation.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, assessment criteria designed in collaboration with students enable real benefits (in terms of the final assessment mix and a shared understanding of their remit and purpose) and enable students to have some input into decision making about the assessment strategy. Similarly, involving students in the development of feedback procedures (timing, format and focus) can bring benefits in terms of student engagement with their own personalised learning.

“I take opportunities to let my lecturer know the areas I would like feedback on, including strengths and weaknesses”
Student Feedback
How would you do if you asked yourself these questions?

Q2.1 I provide a range of assessments to ensure inclusivity

Q2.2 My assessments have the capacity to inspire and motivate my students

Q2.3 I ensure that students have choice in the topic, method, criteria, weighting or timing of assessments

Q2.4 I involve students in decision making about assessment and practice

Q2.5 I seek the views of students regarding the feedback they would like to receive

Principle 2
Good Practice in Assessment for Learning ...
Supports personalised learning

http://tinyurl.com/7gmmmnu
Good Practice in Assessment-for-Learning:

3. Ensures feedback leads to improvement

3.1 Overview
Feedback is an essential aspect of the assessment activity. For feedback to be effective it needs to be prompt and make sense to the students so that they can develop their learning and feed this into their future practice.

Feedback should also...

All programmes of study should explain in the programme/ student handbook the purpose of feedback and how and when feedback will be provided. Information provided to students on feedback should include:

- how feedback will be provided (e.g. orally, on feedback forms or electronically);
- whether and when feedback will be focused on the group or the individual;
- when feedback will be provided

Appropriate procedures should be set in place to provide students with structured feedback linked to the assessment criteria.

Feedback on assessment is important in complementing and supporting the student’s learning. Frequently this is achieved with the use of a feedback pro-forma. Such structured feedback must relate to the student’s performance in regard to the stated assessment criteria.

The language used in giving feedback should be constructive and clear to the student, good practice is to start and end with a positive comment.

“I recognise the many ways that feedback is presented to me about my work and my learning.”

Student Feedback
In order to provide some feedback to students on the progress of their learning, all programmes will include some formative in-course assessment at each level. In particular, in order to provide early feedback, all first year undergraduate modules in semester A should include an assignment, exercise or test, which is either summative or formative, within the first five weeks of the session.

- The purpose of setting an assessment task early is to provide new students with a taste of HE assessment, to give them an indication of how well their learning is progressing, and to provide some motivation to learn.

- Formative in-course assessment is taken to mean any piece of work for which students receive feedback on their performance.

- Students respond to regular and timely feedback that motivates their learning in a positive way and is an essential aspect of assessment activity. Good feedback provides a commentary on the students’ submissions; offers advice on how the work could be developed; and provides future opportunities for students to demonstrate how they have engaged with and learned from the feedback.

- Good feedback should; be produced quickly enough to be of use to students, be detailed, frequent and in a language that the student can understand.

- Students should have the opportunity to act on their feedback; discuss it with their peers and lecturers and identify their strengths and weaknesses, if appropriate.

- Feedback should provide high quality information related to the assessment criteria that helps learners self-correct.

- A well planned programme providing a variety of assessments that interconnect and are meaningful will enable students to see not only individual assessments but how they fit together to make a whole.

- Modules are explicitly interconnected by the feedback – helps students see relationships from one module to another and also see that feedback from one module can be used to support their learning in another module.

- Students learn in different ways and therefore feedback is not ‘one size fits all’. Within reason students should be able to request feedback in various formats depending on their needs.
3.2 The National Union of Students gives clear guidance on what students expect from feedback, these should be taken into consideration when developing the assessment criteria.

**NUS Ten Feedback Principles:**

1. Should be for learning, not just of learning
2. Should be a continuous process
3. Should be timely
4. Should relate to clear criteria
5. Should be constructive
6. Should be legible and clear
7. Should be provided on exams
8. Should include self-assessment and peer-to-peer feedback
9. Should be accessible to all students
10. Should be flexible and suited to students’ needs

The Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange (ASKe) at Oxford Brookes University have designed 1, 2, 3 leaflets on a variety of issues in Learning and Teaching, they include;
- Face-to-Face feedback
- Feedback – Making it work for you
- How to make your feedback work in three easy steps
- Using generic feedback effectively
- Making peer feedback work in three easy steps

ASKe resources on feedback: [http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/resources/index.html](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/resources/index.html)
Within the ‘toolkit’ there is a guide for lecturers to use to check that feedback is ‘fit for purpose’

http://tinyurl.com/7gmmnmu
Good Practice in *Assessment-for-Learning*:

4. **Focuses on student development**

4.1 **Overview**

Assessment has a significant influence on student motivation and the ways in which students approach their learning. Timely, meaningful assessment develops the students’ interests, motivations and encourages them to engage in their study to meet the learning outcomes.

**Ultimately good assessment motivates good learning.**

Well planned assessment facilitates the student to reflect on their own learning and self-assess. When students gain an understanding of the learning and assessment process, they will be able to gain insights into their own particular learning style and this will enable them to become more proactive and successful. Well-designed assessment activities identify strengths and guide the student in ways that they can personally develop.

Assessments should encourage effective learning behaviours (i.e. deep *not* surface, understanding *not* just memory). These include spending appropriate time on tasks, with effort spread across topics and weeks and making links across knowledge domains. The process itself should be productive in terms of identifying and developing enquiry and knowledge building processes in a discipline. Assessment preparation should ensure appropriate scaffolding is given to enable students to work toward being independent learners.

Assessment should encourage positive beliefs and build student confidence. Feedback should be constructive, specific, honest and supportive. Feedback on summative assessment should not only explain the mark awarded but also help the student understand how he/she can make future improvements. For example:

- Assessment tasks may be split so that students get feedback (from staff or peers) as the task progresses.
- Assessment tasks may be explicitly linked to one another so that students explicitly refer back to/reflect on previous feedback, the assessment is designed to focus on the learning, not the marks.
Reflective assessments help students to apply learning to practice either in the workplace or work experience, scenario-based assignments promote discussion and deep thinking to find solutions to problems and develop actions/ideas for the future.

Viva’s and OSCEs promote discussion, student’s self-confidence and development, communication skills are essential demonstrating deeper understanding and learning.

Even where tasks are not formally linked in anyway, students can be encouraged to use feedback on generic aspects of assessment (such as written communication) to improve performance in future pieces of work.

Assessment strategies should help students develop academic integrity and an understanding of how to engage with and/or build on the ideas of others.

4.2 Academic Integrity

Programme tutors should provide students with clear guidelines on Academic Integrity and what constitutes cheating, collusion and plagiarism in Programme/Student handbooks. Students should be provided with the opportunity to learn to write academically by teaching them how to summarise, paraphrase, and use appropriate quotations and the correct referencing style. Programme/module tutors also need to support students to develop their academic writing as they progress through their degree.

Students should be supported in their learning in terms of what constitutes plagiarism and collusion and how to develop their writing so as to avoid plagiarising. Evidence suggests that using plagiarism detection software without supporting students by developing good academic writing skills and understanding of the need to reference is less effective and alienates the student body.
The University has entered into an agreement to provide all Schools with access to the JISC Plagiarism Detection Service called Turnitin. This on-line service is a text matching service, which enables staff to carry out electronic comparison on students’ work against electronic sources, including other students’ work. Turnitin is now available on StudyNet to provide students with formative feedback on their work.

Assessment tasks should be designed to minimise the possibility of plagiarism. For example, change the format of the assignment (a poster instead of an essay). It is not good practice to ask students to write their assignment using only one or two articles as this can lead to collusion. (ASKe http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/resources/index.html)

Students should be informed there is a possibility that their work may be screened for plagiarism using Turnitin. Students should be made aware that in signing the University Regulations they have indicated their consent for work to be submitted for plagiarism screening and to be retained by the JISC service.

All schools should adopt a policy and embed it within the curriculum to develop academic integrity and good writing and referencing skills. It is not effective to only provide this information at induction. This may be within one of the modules on their programme or for example in a separate study skills session.

Approaches to citation and referencing should be modelled and practised as part of assessment preparation. Academics should embrace the teaching of academic integrity and demonstrate this in any academic writing and referencing provided to students e.g. PowerPoint slides, Handouts, Module guide, Case Studies etc.

International students, whose language skills may not be developed sufficiently to paraphrase effectively, should be given additional tutorial support to enable them to succeed.

Academic integrity can be linked to employability skills as a form of professional integrity. For more information on Graduate Attributes: http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/intranet/lti.nsf/Teaching+Documents?Openview&count=9999&restricttocategory=Strategy+and+Policy/Graduate+Attributes
Examples of how different assessment can focus on student development

- Low stake assessments in the form of unseen drop quizzes throughout a module enables students to identify what they are doing well, and areas where they lack understanding. The regular quizzes help students to acknowledge the level of work they are currently achieving and to identify the level they need to reach. The regular assessments help the students to self regulate their own learning.

- Reflective assignments are good opportunities for students to consider the learning they’ve gained from work experiences. Reflecting on a work scenario helps students to articulate the learning they gained from the experience and will help them to respond appropriately when faced with similar circumstances in the future.

- A viva or questions following a presentation enable students to demonstrate in depth understanding of a topic. The questioning technique may enable the member of staff to tease out understanding which perhaps would not be evident in a written exam or could allow the student to demonstrate how the topic fits within the wider context and links with other areas of study.

http://tinyurl.com/7gmmnmu
Good Practice in Assessment-for-Learning:

5. Stimulates Dialogue

Good assessments support the development of a learning community and provide opportunities for students to engage in a dialogue about their learning

5.1 Overview

A good learning environment considers the individual student whilst also recognising the importance of a learning community. Further, learning is enhanced if students are able to share their conceptions and misconceptions.

Teachers too should have an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with students and colleagues to help them shape their teaching and engage in staff, module and programme development.

- Assessment activities should be designed to support the development of learning groups/communities, using activities that encourage interaction and dialogue will engage the students and encourage discussion. For example; peer assessment, group presentations.

- Other assessments should be developed to encourage opportunities for students to develop their own internalised conceptions of standards and monitor and supervise their own learning. For example; blogs, wikis and social media

- Regular assessment activities designed throughout the module will provide feedback to the lecturer and student on areas of strength and weakness to focus on for future teaching sessions.

Programme teams should ensure that the assessment package reflects the progressive development of the programme learning outcomes and that the assessment tasks reflect the level of study and the dialogue that has taken place. For example: In preparing for a programme review, programme teams should discuss their assessment strategy. The team should be able to justify the nature and range of assessment methods and tasks that they have chosen and the documentation should reflect this.

- Assessment and feedback strategies should be central to staff development and reviewed regularly. Experienced staff should mentor new and inexperienced members of staff involved in assessment by;
  - assisting with setting assessment criteria/markings or grading schemes for each assessed task.
discussing a sample of marked assignments to consider marking standards.
- checking assessment scheduling, e.g. submitting questions to external examiner, getting marks in by deadline, returning work.

5.2 Anonymous marking

The university supports the call from the National Union of Students (http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/highereducation/learning-and-teaching-hub/anonymous-marking/) to use anonymous marking wherever possible. Our support is based on an Academic Quality perspective and an equality perspective – anonymous marking not only helps achieve fairness in marking, it also brings an enhanced perception of fairness.

The use of anonymous marking has potential downsides as well as benefits. The principal downside is that it may appear to depersonalize the staff-student relationship and it can reduce the potential for tailored feedback (see: http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=209075&sectioncode=26)

There are also occasions where the use of an anonymity number does not completely guarantee anonymity e.g.

- Some lecturers (especially with smaller cohorts) may recognize an individual student’s work by their writing style or other cues, such as recognizing when a student has acted on formative feedback
- It may be possible to ascertain that a piece has been written by someone for whom English is not their first language, potentially identifying a student as an international student
- There are some situations where work cannot realistically be marked anonymously e.g. Individual/group presentations and performances
  Student dissertations (at least by the supervisor)
  Artefacts produced in studio work (artwork, models etc.)

These concerns notwithstanding, it is recommended that all work that can realistically be marked anonymously is marked anonymously. Any module team who do not wish to mark anonymously should discuss the issue with their students so that both parties are involved in any decision.

NB: Although objectively marked tests (MCQs etc.) can be marked anonymously, in practice there is no requirement to do so because the objective nature of the marking eliminates bias from the marking process.
5.3 Assessment dialogue should be practical, inclusive and fair for the diverse student body;

UH has a commitment to reaching and including all students studying at the University (Student Experience Strategy 2010-2015) to ensure equality of opportunity for students of all protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010).

- Practicable means that the assessment is based on the learning outcomes that need to be assessed and is possible within the resources available and any constraints e.g. requirements of professional bodies.

- ‘Inclusive’ means choosing assessment methods and procedures that will be accessible to as broad a range of students as possible so that additional adjustments required by individuals are minimised.

- ‘Fair’ means ensuring that all students have an equal chance to demonstrate their learning. This requires prevention of discrimination whilst addressing individual and/or group differences that would otherwise impact unfavourable on students’ assessment performance. Fair assessment therefore includes adjustments to assessments.

There are significant differences in the educational experiences of some groups of students, therefore staff should engage in dialogue to develop a range of assessment methods to offer on their programmes.

It is important to ensure that a short statement is included in programme review/validation documentation to demonstrate that consideration has been given to any unfavourable or unjustified effects of assessment tasks on student groups who may be disadvantaged. Adjustments that the University allows are indicated in UPR AS12 Appendix 2.

A good learning environment considers the individual student whilst recognising the importance of a learning community. Further learning is enhanced if students are able to share their conceptions and misconceptions.

- Teaching methods can open up or close down dialogue. The Electronic Voting System (EVS) has been used across the University to capture to voices of all students in the classroom. EVS relates to three of Chickering and Gamson’s principles for good practice in Undergraduate Education (1987);
  - Uses active learning techniques. (Encourages active learning)
  - Gives prompt feedback
  - Respects diverse talents and ways of learning
In addition EVS, develops reciprocity and cooperation among students, communicates high expectations and emphasizes time on task.

Some case studies are available to explore how EVS has been used by different disciplines and in different sized groups, to find out more go to the LTI webpage on StudyNet, find information on the ‘Knowledge Exchange’ or attend one of the LTI workshops on getting started with EVS.

5.4 What students say helps dialogue for them;

I take every opportunity to contribute to group and class discussions.

I look for opportunities to discuss my assessment with my peers and my teachers.

I use the assessment tasks (and subsequent feedback) to help me develop my understanding of the standards expected of me.

I look for other sources of help to support my assessment. This might include reading lists, learning groups, central support services etc.

When needed, I seek opportunities to discuss assessment with other members of staff e.g. personal tutor, programme tutor, year tutor.
Good assessment engages student in dialogue

5 Good Practice in Assessment-For-Learning: Stimulates dialogue

A good learning environment considers the individual student whilst also recognising the importance of a learning community. Further, learning is enhanced if students are able to share their conceptions and misconceptions. Good assessments support the development of a learning community and provide opportunities for students to engage in a dialogue about their learning.

Teachers too should have an opportunity to engage in a dialogue. A dialogue that helps them shape their teaching and engage in staff, module and programme development activity.

- Some students will work with each other in preparation for assessment.
- There are structured opportunities for dialogue on the assessment.
- Some students will complete the assessment individually.
- Students work in groups to develop their learning in preparation for assessment.
- There are formal and informal opportunities for discussion of the learning and assessment.
- Some students will have the opportunity to develop new skills while completing the assessment.
- Not all students will use opportunities for dialogue to develop their understanding.
- Achievement rates will be varied.
- Students use the assessment to clarify expectations.
- Students learn and develop new skills during assessment preparation.
- Students understand their development and know how to develop further.
Good Practice in Assessment-for-Learning:

6. Considers student and staff effort

6.1 Overview

Good assessments should distribute the students’ effort across the study-period and topic areas. Good assessments will demand an appropriate amount of student effort. Good assessments will not, however overload students nor their teachers. Good assessments ensure there is adequate time for teachers to create and deliver feedback in ways that support student learning.

The QAA Code of Practice on the Assessment of Students calls for institutions to ensure that the amount and timing of assessment enable effective and appropriate measurement of students’ achievement of intended learning outcomes (Precept 6).

The amount of assessment needs considering, an appropriate assessment load that might include:

- developing an effective mechanism to plan and monitor student assessment workload across each module, semester and programme
- developing an assessment framework to help integrate assessment tasks into a coherent whole
- producing a calendar of assessments across all modules, including submission and return dates, to help provide more a evenly spread workload and to enable students to better reflect on what has been learnt from previous assignments
- auditing assessments annually for actual workload
- ensuring the assessment burden for any member of staff is not excessive and appropriately distributed
- establishing assessment equivalency guidance for use within and across schools to enable consistency particularly when students are studying modules from more than one school e.g. provide typical assessment loads for 15 and 30 credit point modules

Balancing formative and summative assessment is important, QAA guidance advices avoidance of excessive amounts of summative assessment and emphasises support for learning especially through formative assessment; using formative assessment to spread out the summative assessment load – not in addition but as an alternative.

6.2 Good practice at programme level

- Good distribution of student work load (across the modules)
- Variety of assessment stakes (low, medium and high).
- Timing of the assessment activity has been organised to reduce bunching of student effort and
ensure students can commit properly to all of the tasks

All assessments (in module) are linked via the feedback and modules assessments aligned across the programme.

“I put all my assessment deadlines in a diary so that I am aware of my workload”.

Student Feedback

Assessment needs to be aligned to the learning tasks and activities. Possibly ways to reduce the burden on students includes avoiding unnecessary assessment of the same knowledge, skills and understanding by carefully considering:

- how many times they are needed to be demonstrated in the programme
- setting assessments that maintain the academic standard expected and are suitable for the majority of students
- measuring student workload by notional hours of effort to provide an indication of relative effort
- asking students to estimate the length of time spent on each assessment
- encouraging students to use time management tools
- using shorter assignments or do not count all assignments
- involve students in self and peer assessment

Consider ways of addressing students’ understanding of workload such as:

- explaining assessment workloads in detail at the beginning of each semester
- explaining individual assessments (including marking criteria and expected outcomes) in greater detail prior to, and at the time, they are issued
- consider two-stage assignments where feedback from stage one helps improve stage two
- agree on appropriate time expectation for assignments and provide guidance to students to give a them an indication of how long an assessment should take

For example, “We would normally expect you to spend approximately 10 hours on this assignment in addition to your regular independent study on this module”
Example of good practice:

Programme view of positive Assessment Patterns: multiple use of feedback

Moving away from high stakes, end-of-process assessment

- Represents low stakes assessment
- Represents medium stakes assessment
- Represents high stakes assessment

Low stakes assessment

High stakes assessment (formal examination etc).

Module A

Module B

Module C

Module D

http://tinyurl.co/7gmmnu
Supporting staff workload and staff effort also needs careful consideration, for example by:

- providing detailed assessment-related information on StudyNet
- using self-assessment with integrated tutor feedback
- using small group break-out discussions/tutorials of feedback in class after students have received written feedback
- requesting the type of feedback students would like when they hand in the work
- having students identify where they are having difficulties
- asking students to identify examples of feedback comments they found useful and explain
- having students give each other descriptive feedback on their work in relation to published criteria before submission how they helped
- considering what is optimum feedback
e.g. three or four well-thought out feedback comment per essay; prioritising areas for improvement; provide some action points
- use of frequent ‘diagnostic’ low stakes assessments
- provide assessment and feedback grids
- considering re-submissions for enhancing learning
- considering two-stage assignments where feedback for stage one helps improve stage two
- helping students ‘trouble shoot’ their own performance and self-assess; provide their own action points
- providing marked assignments as benchmarks
- providing assessment feedback sheets
- providing generic feedback on StudyNet and ask students to evaluate their own work in the light of this feedback.

The online submission system at the University of Hertfordshire has an automated feedback system with banks of generic statements to help staff provide prompt feedback. The statements can be easily adjusted to provide specific and / or personalised comments.
6.3 This grid illustrates the concept of finding a balance between effective and efficiency

**Effectiveness vs. efficiency**

- **Gold star support**: supports learning and doesn’t take much time
- **Rolls Royce**: great for students but takes a lot of time for staff
- **London Bus**: little time but not effective

(Hornby, 2003)

- If you have too much Rolls Royce, this could be because you are too passionate about your subject, avoid a mis-match between your enthusiasm and what you can efficiently achieve.
- If you have a large student numbers, think about gold standard assessments and how technology can help achieve this.
- Use this guidance document and the linked resources to consider alternative assessments that are both effective and efficient.
Sources of further information

ASKe 123 resource leaflets  http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/index.html


Biggs J (2003). Teaching For Quality Learning At University (2nd ed.): The society for research into higher education.


Disability Adjustment allowances: UPR Appendix II AS12  http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/secreg/upr/AS12.htm

Escape Project UH  http://tinyurl.com/escape-project


Good practice in Assessment
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/heinfe/An_Introduction_to_Assessment

Guidance on developing your Module
http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/technical_support.nsf/manuals?ReadForm

http://www4.rgu.ac.uk/files/EFFICIENCY%20AND%20EFFECTIVENESS%20IN%20ASSESSMENT.pdf

JISC TechDis: Inclusion Technology Advice. A leading UK advisory service, on technologies for inclusion and accessibility. inspiration and advice to support the innovative use of technology within the education, business and community sectors. www.techdis.ac.uk

JISC The Design Studio: Assessment and Feedback: Peer assessment and review
http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/52947134/Peer%20assessment%20and%20review
(accessed 26th June 2012)

LTI Knowledge Exchange – Assessment and Feedback
http://www.studynet1.herts.ac.uk/intranet/lti.nsf/Teaching+Documents?Openview&count=9999&restricttocategory=Guidance,+Resources+and+Toolkits/Assessment+and+Feedback

Learning Outcome guidance

Level Descriptors: UPR AS14 section A2.4

National Union of Students (2010) Feedback: What can you expect


Nicol D J (2007) Assessment design for learner responsibility  [http://www.reap.ac.uk](http://www.reap.ac.uk)

Programme handbooks: guidance
[http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/aqo.nsf/page/6FC2DB4941692026802573480031A55Ax](http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/aqo.nsf/page/6FC2DB4941692026802573480031A55Ax)

QAA Benchmark Statements and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications:
[http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/default.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/default.asp)

QAA Code of Practice, section 3 ‘Students with Disabilities’


Sheffield Hallam University: design and delivery of inclusive academic assessments.
[www.shu.ac.uk/services/lti/accessibleassessments](http://www.shu.ac.uk/services/lti/accessibleassessments)

South West Academic Network for Disability Support (SWANDS)
[www.plymouth.ac.uk/assets/SWA/10.Assessment.pdf](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/assets/SWA/10.Assessment.pdf)


Turnitin support in the form of guides, manuals and videos is available at
[http://www.submit.ac.uk/en_gb/support-services](http://www.submit.ac.uk/en_gb/support-services)

Student and staff support on Turnitin, together with Frequently Asked Questions can be found on StudyNet using the following link.  [http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/LIS.nsf/lis/Turnitin](http://www.studynet.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/LIS.nsf/lis/Turnitin)

UH Case Studies  on Academic Integrity
[http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/CopyrightPlagiarism/CaseStudies.html](http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/CopyrightPlagiarism/CaseStudies.html)

UH i-Spy learning resources
[http://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/LIS.nsf/lis/ispy](http://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/LIS.nsf/lis/ispy)
What influenced students most was not the teaching but the assessment (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004, p. 4)

Assessment is the senior partner (in CA) – get it wrong and the rest collapses (Biggs, 2003, p. 165)

The methods we use to assess students are one of the most critical of all influences on their learning”. (Ramsden, 1993)

If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment (Brown, Bull & Pendlebury, 1997)