

Guidance for design of assessment in modules

1. Why this guidance exists

In a modular programme it is necessary to ensure that the load of assessment on students is equivalent between the different modules and that the overall demand on students is not very different when the various different combinations of modules are compared.

2. Notes on Terminology

In this paper the credit value of assessments is used as a means of describing the size of an assessment. So an in course essay that is 33% of a 15 credit module is described as a 5 credit assessment. This is simply a device for ease of description.

This guidance categorises modules as either taught or project.

3. Principles to use in Deciding Assessment in Modules

3.1. *Differences in forms of Assessment*

Different students prefer different forms of assessment. Whether a particular assessment type is 'difficult' or 'easy' depends on a combination of the topic, the assessment type and the student's learning style. Thus, there is no intrinsic view that a particular type of assessment is more demanding than another. The guidelines on size and type of assessment are simply to control load for students and encourage diversity of assessment types.

3.2. *Four aspects*

In deciding the assessment to be used in a module a balance must be found between the following four aspects of assessment:

- The reliability of the assessment. (A very short examination with few questions or an OSCE with few stations might not be a valid tool).
- The validity of the assessment type (examination, practical, presentation etc.) in relation to the learning outcomes and pedagogical aspirations.
- The cost of the assessment in staff time and other resources to set, deliver, mark and give feedback.
- Security of Assessment – can the assessment be fairly delivered with no bias or advantage to particular students due to for example, timing or location?

4. Load and Format Guidance for Modules at Levels 5, 6 and 7

4.1. *Relation to Quality Assurance Processes*

Where assessments for a module fall within this load guidance the specific proposal will not necessarily need testing through QA processes unless reviewers see other points of discussion. Where proposal arrangements fall outside of this guidance QA reviewers will question and test the proposal.

4.2. Load Guidance for Taught Modules at Levels 5, 6, 7

Examinations				
Credit Value	Typical Time Allocated for unseen written examination	Minimum Time Allocated for unseen written examination	Maximum Time Allocated for unseen written examination	Notes
15	3 hours	2 hours	3 hours	Other forms of examination e.g. open book are likely to have different times
10	2 hours	90 minutes	2 hours	ditto
7.5	90 minutes	75 minutes	2 hours	ditto
5	An examination short enough to be worth 5 credits is unlikely to be valid.			
Summative Assessed Coursework				
Credit Value	Maximum word count			
15	3000			
10	2000			
5	1000			
Oral Presentations (Taught and Research Modules)				
Credit Value	Typical length in minutes	Minimum length in minutes	Maximum length in minutes	
12	40	30	60	
7.5	30	20	40	
6	15	10	30	
5	15	10	20	
Research Module Project Write Up				
Credit Value	Minimum word count for a Full Report or a Manuscript for publication	Maximum word count for a Full Report or a Manuscript for publication		
54	5000	10000		
48	4500	8000		
30	3000	6000		

4.3. Format Guidance for Modules at levels 5,6 and 7

Taught Modules should contain at least 7.5 credits awarded by examination or one third of the module credit whichever is the greater.

Taught Modules should contain at least one third of the module credit as assessed coursework.

Project modules will have at least 50% of the available credit awarded on the basis of the project write up

5. Modules at Level 4

It is to be expected that there is more emphasis on formative assessment at level 4 therefore level 4 modules are exempt from this guidance. Each module should contain just sufficient assessment to reasonably test the module's learning outcomes. In the pathway overall the summative assessment should give sufficient confidence to safely enable the award of Certificate of Higher Education where required. There should also be a range of assessments to ensure students have experienced types of assessments that they are likely to encounter later in the course.