The Assessment Strategy
Self-Assessment Tools

2017-2021
The Assessment Strategy and Self-Assessment Tools

Assessment of student learning and competence is at the heart of higher education. The academic standards of our University and students are evidenced and verified by assessment. League tables, so important to an institution’s reputation, rest on a foundation of students’ satisfaction with our assessment. Employers of our students recruit their staff based on competency measured by our assessments. Quite apart from the impact on the institution, students and employers, assessment also has an influence on staff - from life-work balance to leaving sufficient time for research.

The crucial importance and influence of assessment in most arenas of University activity, means that we have to get it right.

Curriculum Transformation provides an opportunity for programme teams to evaluate and consider assessment practice in accordance with an Assessment Strategy and Policy. The Curriculum Transformation Assessment and Feedback Task and Finish Group, seconded from the Assessment and Feedback Working Group, has developed the University of Leicester Assessment Strategy, based on the University of Leicester Learning Strategy. The Assessment Strategy aims to describe the University’s underlying principles of assessment, develop shared language around assessment, clarify roles and responsibilities of those involved and facilitate enhancement of assessment and feedback.

This Assessment Strategy and Self-Assessment Tools spring from good practice already in place in many programmes. These tools, based around the six Design Principles, are intended to enable programme teams to recognise current good practice and identify where support is needed to work towards alignment with the Assessment Strategy.

*The Assessment and Feedback Working Group*

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Design Principle 1

Assessment must be for and of learning.

Translation

Assessment for learning is where assessment builds on and integrates earlier learning and knowledge. Assessment for learning does not attract marks and relies on provision of feedback and its effective use by students. Assessment of learning attracts marks and is used to show that learning outcomes have been met. These represent different ways of describing and understanding the purpose of assessment, rather than hard distinctions between different types of assessment. For example, a summative assignment serves the purpose both of allocating marks, but also of providing students with opportunities to produce knowledge, receive feedback and develop relevant academic practices. Programme design should make clear the ways in which assessment is both of and for learning.

Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 5:

Do all your modules and programmes include a coherent scheme of assessment for and of learning?

1. We only use assessment of learning.
2. We use assessment of learning and have some assessment for learning, but it is not explicitly designed to be joined up throughout the programme.
3. We use assessment of learning and have some assessment for learning, which is designed to be coherent throughout the programme where it is present.
4. We use assessment of learning and have considerable assessment for learning which is designed to be coherent throughout the programme when present.
5. All our modules and our programme are designed to comprehensively include a coherent scheme of assessment of and for learning.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?

Action points
Considerations to help address Action points:

- Assessment is key to the wider student experience rather than just a way of obtaining marks and meeting learning objectives.
- Assessment allows students to evaluate their learning experience.
- Assessment of and for learning must be appropriately balanced in modules and throughout programmes.
- Students should be explicitly engaged to understand the roles that assessment of and for learning have in their student experience and achievement. Students should be shown how assessment is used coherently throughout their programme (see Design Principle 3: Staff and students must be assessment literate).
- Additional specific resources to help address these Action points are available on the LLI Assessment and Feedback pages.
Design Principle 2

Assessment must be considered at programme level.

Translation

It is normal for module convenors to decide on assessment type, style and submission deadline for their module. It is far less common for there to be a clear mapping of assessments throughout a programme. The assessment plan must address the programme learning outcomes, competencies in the Transferable Skills Framework and criteria in the Accessible Assessment Guidelines. There must be a variety of assessment types throughout the programme, structured in such a way that students have an opportunity to improve performance progressively over the programme. Programme Specifications must clearly map assessments against programme learning outcomes for each year.

Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 5:
How are the types, timings, and reoccurrences of assessment types determined across your programmes?

1. Assessments and transferable skills are the responsibility of each module convenor alone.
2. Programme level consideration of assessment and transferable skills is limited to the ‘size’ (e.g. number of words) of the assessments in each year.
3. Variety in the type and size of assessment and transferable skills is considered for some but not all routes through the programmes.
4. Assessments are mapped to the programme specification learning outcomes; transferable skills are mapped to the Transferable Skills Framework.
5. Assessments types are varied throughout the programme taking care to allow for formative learning from feedback. All assessments are mapped to the programme specification learning outcomes; transferable skills are mapped to the Transferable Skills Framework.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?

Action points
Considerations to help address Action points:

- Assessment must be considered at programme level because the qualification students receive needs to reflect their ability and competence at the end of the programme, rather than at discrete points throughout the programme.
- Transferable skills that include the rules, standards and ethics of academic writing with integrity should be a core and programme-level activity.
- Staff and student workload should be considered when reviewing the assessment type and load at programme level to ensure that assessment is reasonable and appropriate.
- Assessment should also be considered from the accessibility point of view to ensure that it meets the needs of all University of Leicester students.
- Assessment should support student progression through the programme and provide multiple opportunities for development, enhancement and reflection on the transferable skills.
- Additional specific resources to help address these Action points are available on the LLI Assessment and Feedback pages.
Design Principle 3

Staff and students must be assessment literate. Implicit and explicit elements of assessment must be part of programme design and be used to deliver agreements in the Feedback Charter.

Translation

Students understand explicit instructions for assessments but often fail to appreciate the purpose of assessment and elements implicit in the assessment and feedback process. Staff and Student understanding of the language and process of assessment, feedback, academic integrity and ethics (including plagiarism) - assessment literacy - must be designed into all programmes. Opportunities should be made available, at appropriate points in the programme, for staff and students to develop their shared understandings of expectations, assessment criteria, what good practice 'looks like' etc. This is particularly important where additional varieties of assessment are introduced which may require students to articulate their knowledge in 'novel' and less familiar ways. Opportunities must be provided for students to self and peer-assess/reflect on their work, and compare standards with those set by staff. Staff will reflect on how students engage and interpret feedback throughout their programme.

Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 4:

Do all staff and students understand the process and purpose of formative and summative assessments, assessment of and for learning and the setting of assessment standards?

1. Students are set assignment tasks assuming that they know what is required to get a good mark and meet the learning outcomes. Feedback does not fully comply with the Feedback Charter.
2. Students are set assignment tasks and are given the assignment rubric to help them meet the learning outcomes. Feedback does not fully comply with the Feedback Charter.
3. Students are set assignment tasks and actively encouraged to engage in understanding the process of assessment and standards from the rubric. Feedback complies with some parts of the Feedback Charter.
4. Students are set assignment tasks and are given opportunities to discuss the assessment process and assessment standards after consideration of marked exemplars of work across the spectrum of achievement. Feedback complies with the Feedback Charter.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?
Considerations to help address Action points:

- Peer and self-review can help develop assessment literacy because it engages students with assessment criteria and enables them to practice making evaluative judgements.
- Formative and iterative forms of assessment can play a helpful role in enabling students to better understand criteria and expectations and how far they are meeting these (e.g. dissertation proposals and plans provide a good current and common example of this process in practice).
- Staff and students can often work in partnership to formulate, review and articulate assessment criteria, and help explain these to students new to HE study.
- Students should have opportunities to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of marked exemplars of work across the spectrum of achievement.
- Students should be clearly informed about the safeguards of assessors’ judgement of assessment standard safeguards, such as moderation and external examining.
- Feedback to students should relate to the learning outcomes and tell the recipient how to improve.
- Feedback should be timely, clear, relevant and positive in order to make it useful for students and help make progress ahead of the next assessment element.
- All assignments should be marked to a rubric understood by both staff and students.
- Additional specific resources to help address these Action points are available on the LLI Assessment and Feedback pages.
Design Principle 4

Harmonise assessment and re-assessment workload to ensure loads are appropriate and reasonable.

Translation
Assessment loading and challenge per module should be consistent and progressive according to the demands and benchmarked norms for each discipline. Our assessment design will consider the workloads of students and staff, staff and student numbers and the size and volume of assessments. Students should be given time to act on feedback between assignments, where practical. Alternative re-assessments should be used whenever appropriate.

Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 4:
Do your module convenors benchmark assessment load against subject-specific norms and consider whether workload and deadlines appropriate and reasonable for the level of study?

1. All module convenors set their own assessment/re-assessment type, workload and deadlines without reference to related programmes and other institutions.
2. Some module convenors set their own assessment/re-assessment type, workload and deadlines without reference to related programmes and other institutions.
3. Module convenors set their own assessment/re-assessment type, workload and deadlines having benchmarked them against other institutions, consulted with colleagues and considered the workload of staff and students.
4. All module convenors set assessment/re-assessment type, workload and deadlines having benchmarked them against other institutions and mapped assessment and staff and student assessment workload with colleagues in their own and against other programmes.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?

Action points
Considerations to help address Action points:

- Students compare assessment load between institutions - module specifications detailing assessments are public documents and can be found on institutions’ web sites and KIS data.
- If a module has been failed and a resubmission/resit has been allowed, it is not necessary to re-assess to the pass/fail level using the same type of assessment.
- Progressive assignments (assignments of similar type throughout the programme) should have more challenging learning outcomes later in the course noted in the rubric, not just more words.
- Heavy student workloads can lead to heavy staff workloads, poorly-rated modules and surface learning.
- Students should be given an indication of the relative effort required to complete assessment.
- Mapping assessments on a programme (including other programmes run by the Department and in collaboration with others in case of shared modules) onto the academic year should be completed as part of Curriculum Planning processes to identify ‘bottlenecks’ and points of pressure for both staff and students.
- Additional specific resources to help address these Action points are available on the LLI Assessment and Feedback pages.
Design Principle 5

Assessment of learning must aim to be authentic, show achievement of threshold standards and stratify student achievement.

Translation
Assessment of learning must distinguish where students have or have not met threshold standards (i.e. pass/fail). Assessment of learning must allow students to be stratified based on standards of achievement according to a marking rubric. Assessment of learning must, wherever possible, be aligned with expectations of academic disciplines, professional bodies and employers.

Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 4:

Do all your modules and programmes include a coherent assessment of learning scheme suitable for testing learning outcomes and stratifying standards of achievement?

1. Our module and programme assessment of learning scheme does not test learning outcomes or stratify standards of achievement by use of rubrics.
2. Parts of our module and programme assessment of learning scheme tests learning outcomes and stratifies standards of achievement by use of rubrics.
3. Most of our module and programme assessment of learning scheme tests learning outcomes and stratifies standards of achievement by use of rubrics.
4. Our assessment of learning scheme tests learning outcomes and stratifies standards of achievement by use of rubrics.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?

Action points

Considerations to help address Action points:

- Professional judgment of standards, marking and moderation must be clear and reliable.
- By use of exemplars, standards must be constructed with colleagues and in partnership with students to manage expectations and ensure consistency between markers.
- Not all learning can be described by learning outcomes (e.g. practical dexterity, professional interpersonal skills), staff and students must recognise that formal assessments will not cover everything that needs to be learned.
Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 5:

Do your modules and programmes include assessments of learning that align with the expectations of academic disciplines, professional bodies and employers?

1. Our modules and programmes do not include authentic assessments.
2. Our modules and programmes use some authentic assessment of learning but it is not designed to be coherent throughout the programme.
3. Our modules and programmes use some authentic assessment of learning which is designed to be coherent throughout the programme.
4. Our modules and programme use authentic assessment of learning, a considerable amount of which is designed to be coherent throughout the programme.
5. All our modules and our programmes are designed to comprehensively include a coherent scheme of authentic assessment.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?

Action points

Considerations to help address Action points:

- Assessment must aim to be relevant and authentic to support development of graduate attributes and meet the needs of academic disciplines, professional bodies and employers.
- Authentic assessment methods provide students with intrinsically worthwhile and valid measures of programme learning outcomes.
- Programme and assessment design should include consideration of what students will need to be proficient at performing in the workplace.
- Throughout the programme of study, students should have multiple opportunities to engage with authentic assessment that supports the development of their transferable skills and self-awareness, giving them opportunity to reflect, learn and improve.
- Additional specific resources to help address these Action points are available on the LLI Assessment and Feedback pages.
Design Principle 6

Assessment must align with the UoL Digital by Default strategy.

Translation

University strategy includes a ‘digital by default’ approach to the development of all facilities. Assessments should, wherever practical, be designed to be completed, submitted, marked and archived in digital format, in order to provide convenience and efficiency for both students and markers. Similarly, feedback to and from students and personal tutors should be digital, where practical. Creative use of digital platforms has potential to contribute to the diversity, authenticity and efficiency of assessments.

Self-Assessment – score your modules and programmes from 1 to 4:

To what extent is your teaching delivery and management ‘digital by default’?

1. None of our assignments, marking, moderation or archives are digital.
2. A few assignments are completed digitally but they are submitted, marked, moderated and archived on paper.
3. Some assignments are completed and submitted digitally but they are printed off and marked, moderated and archived on paper.
4. All assignments are completed, submitted, marked, moderated and archived digitally.

What evidence is there to justify your self-assessment score?

Action points

Considerations to help address Action points:

- The use of the VLE environment should be considered in making the learning and teaching more effective.
- Recording your lectures, adding voiceover and interactive features to your presentations enhances the student learning experience, supports the needs of diverse learners, as well as allows students to use a variety of electronic devices to access learning.
- Additional specific resources to help address these Action points are available on the LLI Assessment and Feedback pages.