

Bangor University Assessment Framework

1. Introduction

Designing effective assessment is vital, not only as a means of effectively measuring the attainment of learning outcomes, but also as a means of enriching the learning experience. Assessment is central to students' academic life, and evidence suggests that students will often base module choices on the assessment methods that are used.

This Framework was drafted in consultation with a range of persons involved in teaching and learning at Bangor University, including students. It is designed to be used by programme and module leaders, working in partnership with students, when designing and reviewing assessment methods. The Framework includes general principles to be taken into consideration, as well as guidelines relating to assessment workload, and equivalences for different types of assessment.

2. Principles of Assessment

The following principles should be taken into consideration in the design and delivery of assessment:

1. In accordance with the University's *Code of Practice for Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review* (Code 08), assessment for new programmes and programmes put forward for revalidation should be developed in partnership with students.
2. Consultation with students is essential before introducing any changes to assessment. In reviewing the effectiveness of assessment methods, student feedback should be sought and taken into consideration, including data gathered through module evaluations.
3. Steps should be taken to ensure coordination of assessment at the programme level, in order to ensure appropriate balance and variety. It should be recognised that there is a danger of inadequate variety, or of inconsistencies between programmes, if decisions are made solely at the module level. In addition, if students are guaranteed an appropriate diversity of assessment across a programme, they will be more likely to base module choices on the content as opposed to the assessment.
4. Assessment should be equitable and inclusive. In ensuring balance and variety, it should be recognised that different students perform better in some types of assessments than others. The needs of all students, including students with disabilities and learning difficulties, should be taken into account in assessment design. Assessment outcomes should be routinely monitored in order to ensure that particular groups of students are not disadvantaged.
5. All modules, regardless of credit value, should normally have more than one assessment, and in particular, an exam that is worth 100% of the overall assessment should be avoided. As a guideline, modules should have between

two and four assessments, depending on the credit rating. There may be exceptions, for example dissertation modules, or modules where students are expected to compile a portfolio, or perform an ongoing series of related exercises.

6. Assessment should be designed to promote student engagement and student retention. There should be a balance of formative and summative assessment within programmes. Assessment workload should be balanced across the academic year, and should be coordinated at the programme level – taking into account student feedback – to avoid deadlines being bunched. Assessment should be redeemable insofar as is possible.
7. Assessment should be suitably demanding, and should incrementally reflect the level of study. Particular care should be given to ensuring that the assessment genuinely measures students' attainment of the relevant learning outcomes, and provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate that attainment to the highest level possible.
8. Assessment should be efficient. Over-assessment encourages surface learning, and presents an unnecessary workload burden for both students and staff. Learning outcomes should not be assessed repeatedly within a module. In addition, the effort required by students for a given assessment should genuinely reflect the weighting with which it is accorded. In particular, there is a danger that tasks with a low weighting have the potential to take up a disproportionate amount of effort.
9. Peer assessment may be used where appropriate, particularly as a means of formative assessment. Assessing the work of their peers enables students to understand and apply marking criteria to the work of others, thereby directly assisting them to learn to be reflective and objective about their own work.
10. Group assessment may be used where appropriate, but where it is used, students should be graded individually whenever possible.
11. Students should be provided with subject-specific marking criteria, which is applicable to the assessment method being used.
12. Feedback must be provided within four working weeks, and insofar as possible in advance of the submission date of any related subsequent assessment. This will maximise the benefit of the feedback. Where possible, students should be provided with a feedback date prior to submitting an assessment. In the case of exams, feedback should be provided in the subsequent semester.
13. Feedback should be as constructive and encouraging as possible. It should explain the basis of the grade awarded, and should explain how improvements could be made. Feedback should be viewed as an ongoing dialogue between students and markers, and a variety of methods should be used, for example peer-led, one-to-one, group feedback etc.

14. Assessment should be designed to minimise the risk of plagiarism and unfair practice insofar as is possible.

3. Assessment Workload and Equivalence Guidelines

In order to implement the above principles, steps should be taken by those designing modules and programmes to ensure that the assessment workload is appropriate, and falls within what is deemed acceptable under Bangor University's regulations.

As a guideline, it is suggested as a starting point that assessment should have a **notional effort time of 2-2.5 hours per credit**.*

For traditional assessment methods this could be translated into **200-250 words per credit** (for an essay), and **12-15 minutes per credit** (for an exam). This is based on the assumption that a 1 hour exam represents 10 hours of effort time, and that a 1,000 word essay also represents 10 hours of effort time.

This suggests that, based on a hypothetical single assessment method (though note principle 5 above), a 10 credit module would have either a 2,000-2,500 word essay or a 2-2.5 hour exam, with a total effort time of 20-25 hours.

Where a module uses a combination of essays and exams, the following examples illustrate potential measurements:

Example A (20 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
Essay	2,000 words (20 hours)	50%
Exam	2 hours (20 hours)	50%

Example B (20 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
Essay	3,000 words (30 hours)	60%
Exam	2 hours (20 hours)	40%

* Please note that this figure is for guidance only in designing assessment. Students may need to spend more or less time on any given assessment task as appropriate, and in accordance with any adjustments set out in Personal Learning Support Plans. Care should be taken when developing modules to ensure that in addition to contact time and the time needed for assessment, students also have appropriate self-study time, including time to prepare any formative assessment.

Example C (10 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
Essay	1,500 words (15 hours)	60%
Exam	1 hour (10 hours)	40%

Due to the move away from traditional types of assessment (in particular essays and examinations), which are more easily quantifiable, to alternative forms of assessment such as blogs and posters, careful consideration needs to be given to ensuring that the effort required on the part of students for any given assessment is consistent and commensurate with the weighting of that assessment.

In terms of equivalents, it is suggested that the following would each amount to 10 hours of effort time:

- A poster;
- A 1 hour MCQ test;
- An oral presentation of 10 minutes;
- A musical performance of 10 minutes;
- A 2,000 word reflective journal/blog entry;
- A 10 minute clinical assessment.

To provide some further examples, this would mean that a module could have the following assessment measurements:

Example D (10 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
Essay	1,000 words (10 hours)	50%
Oral presentation	10 minutes (10 hours)	50%

Example E (10 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
Exam	1.5 hours (15 hours)	60%
Reflective journal	2,000 words (10 hours)	40%

Example F (20 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
Essay	3,000 words (30 hours)	75%
Oral presentation	10 minutes (10 hours)	25%

Example G (20 credit module)

Assessment Type	Assessment Measurement/Effort Time	Assessment Weighting
MCQ Test	1 hour (10 hours)	20%
Essay	2,000 words (20 hours)	40%
Exam	2 hours (20 hours)	40%

It would be impractical to compile a list of all possible assessment methods, so it is suggested that where a different method is used, consideration is given to the effort time.

In some instances, it may not be immediately apparent how much effort time is required for a particular assessment, for example 'take-home' exams. Where this is the case, appropriate guidance should be provided to students.

The assessment workload can also be adjusted depending on the level of teaching in a module. For example, if the structured study time/contact time is low, then the assessment workload may be proportionally higher (for example, a dissertation).

This Framework recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach to workload is impractical, and that there may be sound pedagogic reasons or other factors such as professional body requirements which makes some variation inevitable. As a rule, however, anything exceeding 10% either side of the suggested workload above would normally require justification at the time of validation.