

# Course Designer: Designing Inclusive Assessment



## Designing Inclusive Assessment

Assessment has a major impact on students and their learning. Summative assessment in particular has the potential to define a student's self-belief and future prospects.

This section of the Course Designer is intended for those who want to design or revise course assessment for the purpose of validation and/or reapproval, or, for example, to address issues such as differential attainment.

### Validity

A valid assessment task must directly relate to the learning that has taken place. For example, a reflective blog is an intrinsically valid assessment of a student's ability to communicate self-reflection. A design portfolio is not necessarily a valid assessment of contextual or critical understanding, unless these are designed into the portfolio task and attached to relevant assessment criteria.

Validity means that you match the appropriate assessment with the type of learning you believe should have taken place, and want the student to demonstrate.

### Main types of assessment

Formative assessment allows students and their tutors to assess progress. It is used to inform further learning. Formative assessments can range from quick and immediate verbal, digital or written tasks, to detailed and lengthy activities that will help students to reflect on their learning and what they need to do to improve. Formative assessment can inform student and tutor equally, and promote dialogue and understanding, or meta-cognition (how we learn), through rich and detailed feedback.

Summative assessment sums up what a student has achieved at the end of a period of study. Summative assessments help students see exactly what they have achieved and are often broader, more comprehensive and have more weighting (known as 'high stakes' assessment) than formative assessment. They can be holistic and therefore contain multiple elements. Also, they assist institutions with quality review, and often produce a grade descriptor or 'band' result referenced in the sector.

### Alignment

The function of alignment is to meaningfully link course aims, outcomes, teaching and learning, and assessment method with each other. You should have already mapped course to unit level outcomes (see Crafting Learning Outcomes). Next, you need to map the variety of assessment methods to learning outcomes and across a course unit or series of sessions.

### Diversifying assessment

We need to both vary and diversify assessment for inclusivity. In creative arts courses, assessment needs to be flexible: it should be adaptive to include and capture the actual learning that takes place in practice, especially where students' learning has divergent, original and creative outputs, and cannot always be planned or intended in advance.

We might also want assessment to evidence embodied or tacit learning that is difficult to demonstrate, including creative attributes and professional qualities.<sup>2</sup>

Designing inclusive assessment keeps in mind individual differences between students for the purpose of accessibility,<sup>3</sup> differences between cohorts of students, and differences between the function of assessment and its role in the scheduled activities of a course.

**'The learning styles, multiple intelligence and inclusive learning literature supports the use of a range of different types of assessments to suit different learners, yet how can staff do this in a systematic way that doesn't exhaust themselves and the students in the process?'<sup>1</sup>**



## Alignment illustration

<p><b>1. Learning Outcome</b></p> <p>Describe a range of research methods used in (the field of...) to contextualise practice.</p>	<p><b>2. Teaching and Learning</b></p> <p>Participate in student debate between 'methods'; design posters that describe a range of research methods; make short podcasts with examples; read highlighted texts; and formatively complete short answer questions.</p>	<p><b>3. Poorly aligned assessment</b></p> <p>Produce a portfolio of designs based on a research method of a contextualised area of your practice. Portfolio to include 10 designs, written notes and annotated sketchbook.</p>
		<p><b>4. Well aligned assessment</b></p> <p>Select one research method, justifying your choice with reference to at least two others, to contextualise an area of your existing practice. Produce a poster, short text or podcast using your chosen research method and examples from your own and others' work.</p>

The poorly aligned assessment is an extension activity asking that the student do design work that was not addressed by initial Learning Outcome or the Teaching and Learning activities. The well aligned assessment closely relates to intended learning and the tasks that the students had practised and learnt about during the educational process from both tutors and their peers.

### Why assess?

Assessment has several purposes, and a simple way of conceptualising these is to think of assessment that is designed *of*, *for* and *as* learning: <sup>4</sup>

**Assessment of learning** refers to the common understanding of assessment as summative evidence of student achievement that is used for the purpose of awarding credits or a qualification. Ensuring accountability, thresholds and standards is requisite for assessment of learning.

### Design principles: appropriate, robust and fair<sup>5</sup>

Firstly, design assessments to produce the correct evidence, and secondly ensure that assessments relate directly to what you want students to learn, as expressed in learning outcomes and planned learning activity. Remember that such assessment tasks should enable all students equally to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes.

**Assessment for learning** focuses on giving students rich, timely and comprehensive feedback to enable learning.

Note that both summative and formative feedback points can be used as learning opportunities in this way. Assessment for learning (AfL) should also help lecturers to differentiate their teaching, resources, practice or the learning environment for the students' benefit.

### Design principles: effective, practical, realistic<sup>6</sup>

If assessment is going to enable and facilitate learning it needs to relate closely to the task in hand or upcoming learning (feed-forward), in other words, be timely.

AfL is effective in a number of ways: it is rich in formal feedback (e.g. tutor comment); uses 'high stakes' summative assessment rigorously but sparingly; develops students' abilities to evaluate their own progress and direct their own learning; offers extensive 'low stakes' confidence building opportunities and practice; emphasises

authentic and complex assessment tasks; and is rich in informal feedback (e.g. peer review of draft writing, collaborative project writing).<sup>7</sup>

Practical and realistic AfL will require a schedule across the unit or course and be designed-in at the planning stage.

If AfL is practical it will need to be effectively communicated, e.g. it is easily accessible to students (readable, appropriate in vocabulary and terminology), and given in a digestible structure, with priorities and key points.

Realistic refers to such things as immediacy, also whether the assessment is deliverable and not too onerous to carry out in order to maximise the benefits for students, e.g. some technologies allow for formative feedback of engagement in class, to assess participation and depth of understanding simply.

**Assessment as learning** is seen as a subset of AfL. It involves students in their own assessment so that they can learn how to judge their performance, perhaps against discipline standards or goals but essentially through self-monitoring when guided by the tutor to improve their own effectiveness.

**Design principles:  
creative, embedded, flexible<sup>8</sup>**

Some argue that the line between 'teaching and learning' and 'assessment' is arbitrary, or too faint to distinguish. Assessment as learning creatively envisions outcomes in diverse and authentic ways. Students learn by doing the assessment and they learn by reflecting on their learning (metacognition).

Assessments can be seen less as a measuring tool between 'knowledge given and knowledge received', but mirror real world, future roles. In other words, assessment is embedded in doing.

Examples of assessment as learning: students design, carry out and evaluate their own work, students design challenging and complex real world tasks such as collaborations or events and evaluate their personal effectiveness across life/ education contexts. Students might be given case studies or practice activities to assist them in developing their self-regulation (time planning and organisation skills for instance).

Remember, assessment as learning will necessarily often lead to more personal and individualised learning (outcomes) than can be predicted or planned in advance.

Assessment can be designed into each course to fulfil each of the functions outlined above: *of*, *for* and *as* learning. The nine principles, derived from the literature and expressed in simple terms (as per Table 1), can be used as a guideline to ensure that this range of requirements is addressed in any given assessment or assessment scheme for a course. Whilst these terms are not exclusive they show the emphasis given in each form of assessment.

Some theorists argue against the intended learning outcome and strict constructive alignment model altogether. They argue instead for 'demonstrations and expressions of appreciation, enjoyment and even pleasure, in the full knowledge that such outcomes pose problems for assessment'.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1: Summary of assessment design principles**

<b>Assessment of learning</b>	<b>Assessment for learning</b>	<b>Assessment as learning</b>
Appropriate	Effective	Creative
Robust	Practical	Embedded
Fair	Realistic	Flexible

## Activities

### Step 1. Devise Assessment

Devise some creative assessment activities 'of, for and as' learning in the context of a chosen unit/course.

Evaluate whether the activities you have devised in the previous step respond to each of the keywords in the table on the previous page.

### Step 2. Mapping Assessment<sup>10</sup>

Design a set of complementary assessments for a specific unit, or a complete level or course, depending on the time available for this activity.

These can be aligned to institutional assessment criteria. At UAL the five assessment criteria of Enquiry, Knowledge, Process, Communication and Realisation encapsulate values and practices for contemporary arts pedagogy.

Use the following summary principles as a pragmatic guide to decide whether the assessments work together as a group of tasks, providing some of the diversity and variety necessary for inclusive assessment as described earlier.

### Assessment principles: practical considerations

These principles can each impact on fairness and equity in order to avoid disadvantaging some students, or creating unethical attainment differentials at certain times or in certain circumstances. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

#### Timing

Have you given students enough time to fulfil the learning and assessment requirements?

Have assessments been phased to not clash and negatively impact workload, for students, and staff for marking?

#### Complexity

Is the assessment robust enough to capture complex learning?

Is the assessment immediate enough to capture direct responses?

#### Equality

Are the assessment methods appropriate for the diverse educational and cultural backgrounds of your students?

Have materials costs to students been taken into account?

Is the assessment adjusted for individual students if required, e.g. for disability, and do students know about these arrangements?

#### Duplication

Have you assessed each outcome once, or are you over-assessing certain outcomes, and under-assessing others?

#### Balance

Do you have range and balance of assessment methods for learning outcomes? i.e too much writing can be balanced by presentations, and range increased by adding presentations, demonstrations or making.

#### Appropriate

Is the assessment method valid in terms of the type of learning outcome?



## References

Full references can be found in the Course Designer Introduction and Resources List.

- (1) O'Neill (2009, p.1) A programme-wide approach to assessment: a reflection on some curriculum mapping tools in O'Neill (2015, appendix 4, p.174).
- (2) The UAL Creative Attributes Framework is one such example of the increasing trend to use student attributes in UK HE. Available at <https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning-exchange/careers-and-employability/creative-attributes-framework>
- (3) Accommodated assessment is the term often used to apply adjustments due to, for example, a disability. UAL's Disability Inclusion Toolkit available to staff at: <https://canvas.arts.ac.uk/sites/explore/SitePage/45680/disability-inclusion-toolkit>
- (4) Bloxham, S. (2014) Assessing assessment: new developments in assessment design, feedback practices and marking in higher education in Fry et al (2015, pp.107-122).
- (5) Derived from Bloxham and Boyd (2007) in O'Neill (2015, p.79).
- (6) Bloxham and Boyd (2008) in O'Neill (2015, p.79) and in reference to authentic assessment that reflects personal relevance and learning from experience in Toohey (1999). Also, Kearney (2013) Improving engagement: the use of 'Authentic self-and peer- assessment for learning' to enhance the student learning experience, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38:7, pp.875-891.
- (7) Sambell, McDowell and Montgomery (2013), Bloxham, S. (2014), *Assessing assessment: new developments in assessment design, feedback practices and marking in higher education* in Fry et al., (2015, pp.107-122).
- (8) Hussey and Smith (2003).

- (9) Hussey & Smith (2003, p.367) in O'Neill (2015, p.29). Hussey and Smith (2003, 2008), Kleiman (2017), Davies (2012), and Addison (2014) generally argue against learning outcomes and for creative assessment as learning.
- (10) Diamond (1998) *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula: A Practical Guide*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass. Also, O'Neill (2015, pp.181-3).



### UAL Course Designer credits

Course Designer is a set of materials produced by the Teaching, Learning and Employability Exchange to support staff in designing arts curricula in Higher Education.

It is intended to complement course validation and/or reapproval and will be useful to course leaders and teams who want to devise or revise their courses to ensure they are coherent.

The resource consists of:

- Introduction and Resources List
- Course Vision and Values
- Defining Course Aims
- Crafting Learning Outcomes
- **Designing Inclusive Assessment**
- Course Structure

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