3. Valid Assessment

Each course should have an assessment strategy that clearly justifies what is to be assessed, how and when because a student's performance on their course must be purposefully, reliably, and fairly assessed.

We need to evaluate each student's achievement on their course. This requires a robust course assessment strategy that maps the course's assessments against the course's intended learning outcomes. Identifying what will be assessed and why, how and why, and when and why, is particularly important on those courses where assessment is organised around modules, as it provides an overview of each student's assessments, so that progression can be supported, and overassessment can be avoided.

The term 'assessment' is currently used variously across the sector to describe a plethora of formative, developmental activities (assessment for learning and assessment as learning), and summative activities (assessment of learning), and is often conflated with the term 'feedback'. It is important to disentangle feedback and formative activity (an element of the learning process) from summative assessment (the measurement of achievement on a course). Summative assessment should provide an accurate and meaningful measurement of a student's holistic capability to apply knowledge and skills in a relevant context appropriate to their level of study.

Reflective questions for course teams

Do you have a course assessment strategy?

1. Is there a published **course assessment strategy**? Do all members of the course team, and all students on the course, have access to this strategy? If not, is it possible to do this?

2. Are the course's learning outcomes concise, meaningful, and achievable? Does every assessment that a student undertakes measure these course learning outcomes and is this formally **mapped**?

3. Does the course team know what each student's **assessment journey** through the course will be, and is each assessment designed to effectively support students' progression towards achieving the course's learning outcomes?

What do you assess and why?

4. Are the course's learning outcomes **relevant**? Do they reflect the required capabilities in an evolving AI world? Are you assessing capabilities that are no longer high value?

5. Does the course team's approach to assessment explicitly assess **course learning outcomes** and the discipline's threshold concepts, behaviours, knowledge and skills?

6. Do you assess using **module learning outcomes**? If so, why? Is it clear how assessed module learning outcomes build towards course learning outcomes?

7. Is assessment appropriately varied across the course to validly assess different skills and knowledge?

8. Are you **over-assessing**? Are all the assessments on the course necessary? Could the assessment and marking loads be reduced? Is there any assessment that could be reworked, combined (e.g. synoptic assessment), or discontinued?

How do you assess and why?

9. How do you ensure assessment is **reliable**? Given the availability of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools and other technologies and services, how do you design assessments that are secure? Are expectations about the use of tools for assessments explicit and well understood, and do you know that no student will be disadvantaged because of differential access to tools?

10. Is an individual student's grade determined, in part, by the contributions of other agents, e.g. students (through assessed groupwork) or GenAI? If so, how do you ensure assessment of the individual student's achievement is **fair**?

11. How do you ensure **authenticity** in assessment? Do you use synoptic assessments that require bringing together learning from several parts of the course, or are all assessments siloed at module level?

When do you assess and why?

12. **When,** in the course, are the course's learning outcomes most appropriately assessed?

13. Do students always have an opportunity to develop, **review** and further develop their work before submitting it for summative assessment? Do students have an opportunity to 'fail safely' and seek support prior to summative assessment? Have you spoken to academic support services about providing additional tailored support both before and after assessments?

14. Are assessment deadlines sensibly spaced? Do you have a course assessment **calendar**?

Are the course's curriculum and assessments aligned?

15. Do you develop your curriculum (what is to be learned/taught) before your assessment strategy (what is to be assessed)? If so, why do you do this? Is your curriculum **overstuffed**? What content might be removed? Is there any 'delivery' time that could be reallocated to ensuring valid and reliable assessment?

For further reading on **Valid Assessment** see the associated Talis Reading List. For case studies, resources and further support with designing and managing valid assessment contact CLT.