Principles of assessment design

These principles should be used in conjunction with the **Principles of Academic Degree Programme Design** and support the **Assessment and Feedback Strategy**.

All new Queen Mary programmes and modules proposed for launch in or after September 2025 must adopt these principles, and all pre-existing programmes and modules should align to these principles over the course of 2025/26 as part of their continuous programme review and enhancement process.

The principles will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they keep matching best sector practice and meeting the needs of students.

The drivers for the principles of assessment design are:
- Strategy 2030 which states that Assessment and feedback is focused, streamlined, aligned with progressing learning and supportive of students realising their academic potential.
- Principle 4 of Principles of Academic Degree Programme Design ('Programme Mapping')
- OfS Condition B1 which states that 'each higher education course is coherent'
- OFS Condition B4 which states that "providers should ensure that students are assessed effectively."
- The Queen Mary Assessment Strategy

Principles	Explanation	Support
1. **Coherent programmes**	**Programme-level assessment** should be prioritised. Individual module assessment design must therefore be seen within the context of overall programme assessment design. Coherent assessment design requires that **priority must be given to the whole programme** of study for a given student.	• Principles of Academic Degree Programme Design • Programme design guidance • Programme level assessment design
2. **Constructive alignment**	• Assessment tasks must enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have attained and exceeded the intended learning outcomes. • Intended learning outcomes must be clear statements of what students need to demonstrate to successfully complete the module. • 3-6 outcomes are normally appropriate for a module overall. There should be at least 1 outcome in each of the categories of academic content, disciplinary skills and graduate attributes. • All module learning outcomes must map to programme learning outcomes.	• Constructive alignment • QMA Assessment Toolkit • Inclusive assessment • Authentic assessment • Intended learning outcomes
3. **Inclusive assessment**	• Assessment design at module and programme level must be inclusive to enable diverse learners to maximize their individual outcomes. • Inclusivity should be anticipatory. • Assessment should be inclusive by design. • Where appropriate, assessment choice (optionality) may be considered as part of assessment design, within the context of constructive alignment. In such cases, assessment choices must test the same outcomes and be of equivalent difficulty.	• Inclusive Curriculum Principles and examples of practice • Inclusive assessment • Appendix A

	• Where a student needs special arrangements, these will be assessed case by case in accordance to the academic regulations for 'examination and assessment access arrangements'. • See Appendix A for examples of inclusive assessment strategies.	
4. Assessment workload (and indicative number of summative assessments)	• Assessment workload must be looked at holistically, considering students' experience at every level and across the programme. • Module assessment must be designed within the context of a clear programme assessment strategy, avoiding over-assessment and assessment bunching across the whole programme. • While assessment load must be considered at programme level, there should be consistency in the assessment workload across modules of the same programme. • At module level, the number and workload of summative assessments should be proportionate to the expected number of notional study hours for the module, and therefore the number of credits of modules and their level. • In some cases, considering the average number of assessments at each Level and across the programme may be more appropriate. For example, for 120 credits one might expect 8 summative assessments spread over 4 30-credit modules, or 10 summative assessments spread over 2 30-credit modules and 4 15-credit modules. • Exceptions (for example to satisfy PSRB requirements or to meet the specific requirements for apprenticeship provision) need to be clearly articulated in the module and programme assessment strategy and must be approved by the relevant Faculty Dean for Education. • Attention should be paid to the weighting of each assessment to ensure balance between assessments. • Repeated, short, low-stakes assessments (such as weekly quizzes) are more appropriate as formative assessment and as such are not appropriate as part of summative assessment design. • See appendix B for further detail	• QMA Assessment Toolkit • QMA Feedback Toolkit • Appendix B
5. Timing of summative assessment and feedback within modules	• Assessment must be timed so that students receive feedback in time to act on it for their next relevant assignment (feed-forward). This may be another assessment within the same module, or another assessment in another module of the programme.	• Programme design guidance and programme level assessment mapping tool

6. Formative feedback	• There must be formative **feedback** opportunities in all modules.
	• Formative feedback opportunities include formative tasks clearly flagged to students as formative, class activities and discussions and other activities where students are able to check their progress against learning outcomes.
	• Formative feedback may take the following forms:
	    • Individual feedback from educator
	    • Class feedback from educator
	    • Mentimeter and other tools
	    • Peer to peer feedback
	    • Self-feedback activities
		• QMA feedback toolkit

	Weekly quizzes	
	• Formative feedback should be inclusive, supportive, forward-facing, constructive.	
7. Suitable assessment types	When considering a suitable form of assessment for Learning Outcomes: • Programme level assessment design must be considered when choosing assessment types for individual modules, to ensure variety of assessment, appropriate scaffolding and alignment to the programme assessment strategy. • The learning outcome skill type must provide the rationale for appropriate types of assessment (in contrast to, for example, an assumed 'given' that examination, or essay-based assessment, are always the only form of assessment). • Check that this process of identifying the assessment type will also involve attention to inclusion (fairness, and diverse expression), and authenticity (why and how the task matters). Refer to principles for inclusive assessment (3) and authentic assessment (9) below. • See Appendix C for a list of examples of suitable assessment types	• QMA Assessment Toolkit • Assessment types inventory • Appendix C
8. Authentic assessment	Authentic assessment evaluates students' knowledge, skills and attributes in real-world and meaningful contexts. It requires students to apply their learning, supporting the development of graduate attributes and skills they will need for future employment and as active global citizens. • All programmes must offer students a number of authentic assessment opportunities. • Variety of assessment should be monitored at programme level to ensure that feedback and scaffolding is in place to develop students' skills. • Assessment can focus on authentic activities and / or students' reflections on these activities • Authentic assessments must support the development of Queen Mary Graduate Attributes and student employability (see examples of types of assessment that can be used to evaluate graduate attributes in appendix D).	• Queen Mary Graduate Attributes • Graduate Attributes: Staff guide and examples of practice • Authentic assessment • Embedding Sustainability in the Curriculum • Appendix D
9. Academic Integrity	• Assessments must be accompanied by clear instructions about the expectations for how students will conduct the assessments, including any technology, equipment, resources or communication students should / should not employ in completing the task. • Students must be provided with resources and guidance that support them to demonstrate academic integrity when completing assessments. • Consideration must be given to assessment security at critical progression points during the programme, with proportionality and flexibility while other stages of learning will provide opportunities for more flexibility.	staff guide to generative AI Student guide to generative AI Academic Integrity module on QM+ QMA workshop on 'Assessment Design for Academic Integrity'

10. Reassessment	Reassessment design will need to follow the above principles, and this should be central in deciding whether to use standard or synoptic reassessment.	
11. Communication to students	There should be clear communication to students about the programme and module assessment strategy, including expected workload attached to assessments.	

Appendix A: Examples of inclusive assessment strategies

- Constructively aligning assessment to Identified Learning Outcomes.
- Assessing only the identified knowledge, skills and abilities, and therefore not measure extraneous features or involve features that prevent equitable engagement.
- Offering different formats for and access points to assessment briefs.
- Giving choice in how students will demonstrate their learning, whether in choice of task or choice of engagement format within a single task (optionality in assessment).
- Giving students opportunities to discuss, to understand and/or be involved in the development of ILOs to enhance their meaningful engagement in assessment practices.
- Providing authentic assessment (see Principle 9) and variety of types of assessment will enable students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities applicable to their disciplinary and professional contexts
- Using inclusive language of assessment tasks.
- Ensuring that formative opportunities for feedback support summative assessment.
- Using inclusive and constructively supportive language in formative and summative feedback

Appendix B: Indicative assessment load

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications states that 1 credit = 10 'learning hours'. Learning hours include: contact time (synchronous, tutorials), directed study (asynchronous, peer-to-peer, group work) independent study, assessment preparation, assessment.

As a rough guide, and following sector conventions and practice, 20 to 30% of student learning hours should normally be devoted to assessment preparation and assessment (Bloxham and Boyd 2007). This should be considered at Programme level and may vary depending on the module; for example, a dissertation module will require a larger percentage of learning hours devoted to assessment (Lancaster 2021).

Care should be taken to avoid exceeding the notional study hours devoted to assessment. Assessment preparation should also be factored in. The overall assessment load should not be affected by the number of summative assessments – the larger the number of summative assessments, the smaller each 'task'. However, large number of small task components should be avoided. For example a large number of repeated (e.g. weekly) low-stakes small tasks is more appropriate as formative assessment and should be avoided as summative assessment.

The following guidelines should be considered when designing assessment.

Credit numbers	**15 credit**	**30 credit**	**60 credit**
Learning hours	150	300	600

	30-45	60-90	120-180
Of which, assessment hours (including assessment preparation)	30-45	60-90	120-180
Recommended number of assessments	1-2	2-3	2-4

It is expected that across a programme, there would be an average of 2 summative assessments per module and no more than 8-12 assessments per 120-credit Level, depending on the size of modules.

Appendix C: Recommended assessment types for learning outcomes and graduate attributes

Learning outcome skill type	Assessment types	Recommended level
Remembering	Multiple choice	4-5
	Essays	4-7
	Field / lab reports	4-6
	Extended answer questions	4-5
	Exams	4-7
Understanding	Essays	4-7
	Extended answer questions	4-5
	Viva / oral exam	5-7
	Field / lab reports	4-6
	Case studies	4-7
	Open book exams	4-6
	Exams	4-7
Applying and analysing	Simulations	4-7
	Problem sets	4-7
	Take home exams	4-6
	Field / lab reports	4-6
	Annotated bibliographies	4-6
	Book reviews	4-6
	Close analysis of source / extract	4-7
	Open book exams	4-6
	Case studies	4-7
Evaluating	Essays	4-7
	Debates	5-7
	Annotated bibliographies	4-6
	Book reviews	4-6
	Case studies	4-7
	Portfolios	5-7
Creating	Essays	4-7
	Dissertations	6-7
	Research proposals	5-7
	Presentations	4-7
	Projects	5-7
	Posters	4-7
	Portfolios	5-7
	Creative response	4-7
	Artefacts	4-7
Discipline specific skills / techniques	Direct observation	5-7
	Supervised practicals	4-6

| | Simulations | 4-7 |
| | Performances | 4-7 |

Queen Mary Graduate Attributes	Assessment types	Recommended level
Communicate effectively	Blog	4-7
	Debate	5-7
	Demonstration	4-6
	Essay	4-7
	Group work	4-7
	Peer review / peer feedback	4-7
	Poster	4-7
	Presentation	4-7
	Report	4-7
	Role play	5-7
	Simulation	4-7
Respect	Group work	4-7
	Peer review / peer feedback	4-7
	Debates	5-7
	Simulation	4-7
	Reflective tasks	4-7
Take responsibility for your own growth and development	Personal development / career plan	5-7
	Reflective tasks	4-7
	Learning journal	4-7
	Portfolio	
Be flexible	Reflective tasks	4-7
	Peer review / peer feedback	4-7
	Two-part assessment	4-7
	Learning journal	4-7
Value yourself	Personal development / career plan	5-7
	Portfolio	5-7
	Reflective tasks	4-7
	Group work	4-7
	Peer review / peer feedback	4-7
	Learning journal	4-7
Apply expertise	Problem based learning	4-6
	Case studies	4-7
	Project work	5-7
	Problem sets	4-6
	Essays	4-7
	Research projects and proposals	5-7
Be digitally fluent	Project work requiring use of computer software	4-7
	Literature review	5-7
	Bibliographies	4-6
	Research proposal	5-7
Engage critically	Essays	4-7
	Exams	4-6
	Case studies	4-7
	Problem based learning	4-6
	Research projects and proposals	5-7
	Dissertations	6-7
	Presentations	4-7
	Debates	5-7
Innovate and problem	Problem sets	4-6

solve	Problem based learning	4-7
	Case studies	4-7
	Project work	5-7
	Group work	4-7
	Lab / field reports	4-6
Collaborate & work in a team	Group work	4-7
	Reflective tasks	4-7
	Peer review / peer feedback	4-7
	Learning journal	4-7
Act ethically	Essays	4-7
	Exams	4-6
	Research projects	5-7
	Research proposals	5-7
	Practicals / demonstrations	4-6
Promote sustainability	Essays	4-7
	Exams	4-6
	Presentations	4-7
	Posters	4-7
	Reports	4-7
	Project work	5-7
	Group work	4-7

Appendix D: Examples of authentic assessment

To make assessment more authentic you can:
- Provide a real-world context for questions or tasks
- Use case based or project-based assessment
- Use varied methods of assessment, giving students opportunities to try a range of formats across a programme, such as written work, presentations, posters, group work
- Integrate skills and graduate attributes development
- Design assessment to produce useful outputs, for example a set of recommendations, an artefact, a portfolio of work
- Have students tackle real world problems, for example relating to sustainability and climate change
- Assess experiential or integrative learning
- Bring employers into the curriculum, for example through students engaging in research projects for employers, or via placements / internships.
- Offer opportunities for reflection and develop students' skills in reflective practice.

Appendix E: Categories of assessment

From Assessment Handbook (2.16):

- Invigilated examination (EXM/EXN) A formal, timed and invigilated assessment that takes place under the regulations for invigilated examinations. To include but not limited to: seen and unseen examinations (including on-line examinations).
- Coursework (CWK) An assessment that takes place during the module. To include but not limited to: essays, reports, presentations, poster presentations, seminar/tutorial work, in-class or in-semester tests, mid-sessional examinations, project proposals, gobbet exercises and homework sheets. Assessment Handbook 2023-24 v2 10 of 80
- Practical (PRA) An assessment that requires the application or demonstration of knowledge and/or skills/competencies in a practical context. To include but not limited to: laboratory work, computer work, performances, fieldwork, Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs)

and oral assessments in languages.
- Dissertation/project (DIS) An extended piece of independent study that is assessed by the output report or long essay. To include but not limited to: dissertations, research projects and project reports.
- Professional capability (CAP) An assessment of a student's professional attitude and conduct to meet the requirements of a Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body. To include but not limited to: assessment of behaviour and conduct (primarily for primary qualifying medical and dental qualifications but may be appropriate in other programmes).
- Final mark (FIN) Used to denote module marks awarded for by non-Queen Mary modules. To include: intercollegiate and study abroad modules.

Appendix F: References

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