

Creating an institutional approach to assessment briefs

Institution: University of Chester

Primary Contact: Jackie Potter

Discipline / subject: Academic Innovation and Development

Academic level: Undergraduate and Postgraduate

Our innovation:

A cross-discipline team were responsible for creating an assessment brief template which was then reviewed and approved by our quality and standards team to ensure all key information was included and clear. The template has now been rolled out for use across the university. The template is available below.

How we measured efficacy:

In a survey of uptake of use, 86 percent of module leaders report on having adopted the new assessment brief in 2023-24. We asked students at Student Voice meetings in February 2024 about the new assessment brief. They reported that the wording on the assessment briefs is clear and understandable, and importantly to the purpose of its redesign for 2023-24, students reported that they felt confident understanding what AI tools could be used and how they should be used.

Additional links or resources:

[University of Chester Guidance on assessment briefs.pdf \(advance-he.ac.uk\)](https://advance-he.ac.uk/University%20of%20Chester%20Guidance%20on%20assessment%20briefs.pdf)

Using previous year's feedback as part of guidance for assessment

Institution: University of Dundee

Primary Contact: Colin T Reid

Discipline / subject: Law

Academic level: Undergraduate (all years)

Our innovation:

Extracts from previous years' feedback for the same style/level of task were directly used as part of the guidance when setting essays, so that common flaws (to be avoided) were identified in advance. This was a response to finding that in marking essays (alongside topic-specific comments) I kept making the same points about structure, presentation, referencing etc. and also could not be absolutely sure that all of these issues had previously been drawn to the students' attention.

Accordingly, both in the hope of reducing their occurrence and to ensure that I was on strong ground in criticising essays for these flaws, it made sense to point out these in advance.

How we measured efficacy:

No rigorous assessment – and certainly not full success in avoiding the noted flaws occurring - but students did ask questions about issues covered suggesting they were paying attention, I felt more confident in my criticisms and several colleagues have adopted this practice.

Online 3-part assessment literacy quizzes

Institution: University of Hull

Primary Contact: Andrew Holmes

Discipline / subject: Education Studies

Academic level: First year undergraduate

Our innovation:

Within the Canvas VLE it is relatively easy to develop and embed a quiz for students. I developed a three-part specific 'assessment literacy' quiz delivered at the end of every 2nd taught session for the first six weeks of semester. I set up a series of three 8-question quizzes asking students about their experiences of assessment processes prior to university, their understanding of some key assessment terms, such as 'formative assessment, and their expectations of assessment and feedback processes at university, such as frequency, type and volume of feedback. I reviewed the students' quiz answers in-class and facilitated discussion to correct misunderstandings and manage their expectations around feedback. This facilitated the development of students' assessment literacy and helped them gain a better understanding of assessment processes and protocols at university.

How we measured efficacy:

All students studying the module (n=56) participated in the assessment literacy quizzes. A survey of the students, plus data from their quiz results were used to evaluate the intervention. Students indicated that they found the sessions very useful in clarifying their understanding of assessment processes and terminology in higher education. The data indicate that, prior to the sessions, many students misunderstood some of the terminology used in relation to assessment. For example, some students believed that formative assessment was 'more formal' than summative assessment and would necessarily involve an exam.

Using a process approach to improve attendance and assessment outcomes

Institution: Liverpool Hope University

Primary Contacts: Lee Mackenzie and Linda Kerr

Discipline / subject: Early Childhood

Academic level: Foundation year (pre-UG)

Our innovation:

We conducted a diagnostic on a foundation year module in Early Childhood to ascertain reasons for low attendance and a high rate of assignment non-submissions. This revealed considerable anxiety about academic writing, which led us to take a process approach to written assessments. This involved:

- + scaffolding through writing frames and collaborative planning;
- + allocating time during seminars for students to work on their drafts;
- + providing personalised feedback on drafts of students' work; and
- + giving workshops on how to use digital tools when writing.

How we measured efficacy:

We compared attendance and submission rates for assessments on this module with previous iterations of the course. For the course we developed, attendance and submission rates were both significantly higher, and the quality of work was also superior to previous cohorts. Using an educational task, opinions regarding the assessment were also elicited. These expressed a strong preference for the process approach over the more typical product approach to academic writing.

Enhancing assessment comprehension with origami fortune tellers

Institution: University of Surrey

Primary Contacts: Nayiri Keshishi and Sarah Hack

Discipline / subject: Psychology

Academic level: Foundation year (pre-UG)

Our innovation:

We developed for a reflective writing assignment which uses origami fortune tellers to familiarise students with marking criteria. In pairs, students analyse exemplars, creating fortune tellers with questions aligned to the criteria. They discuss and decide on marking levels, sharing reasons. The process enhances understanding and prompts students to create personal checklists for their assignments. Originally designed for reflection, it has been successfully adapted to various assessments.

How we measured efficacy:

Positive informal evaluations show consistently high engagement in the activity. Students express excitement about the novelty, sharing past experiences with fortune tellers. Interactions and feedback discussions indicate a deeper grasp of marking criteria, fostering increased self-awareness. Many students subsequently develop personal checklists for assignments, while some reference this activity in reflective journals, citing improvements in reflective thinking and writing skills, especially in meeting marking criteria.

Promoting student understanding of learning outcomes

Institution: Anglia Ruskin University

Primary Contact: John Parkin

Discipline / subject: Education

Academic level: Undergraduate (all years)

Our innovation:

My example of good practice relates to helping students develop a deeper understanding of module learning outcomes (MLOs) to enhance assessment literacy and understand how they will be assessed. In week 1 of teaching, I give students a table listing the MLOs. Students work in groups to highlight the key words. In the table, students then write what they think each MLO means. I then have a whole-group discussion about the key words in the MLOs and what students are being asked to do in terms of assessment. Students can then refer to their notes throughout the module.

How we measured efficacy:

In module evaluation surveys students were specifically asked if the lecturer had explained the module learning outcomes effectively. This score increased after adopting the approach. Fewer students failed assessments with this focus on supporting students to understand module learning outcomes.

Decolonising assessment by using Universal for Design Learning (UDL)**Institution: University of Westminster****Primary Contact: Gustavo R. Espinoza-Ramos****Discipline / subject: Business / Business Management****Academic level: Second year undergraduate****Our innovation:**

In the Sustainable City Economies (SCE) module, UDL principles were embedded, including the multiple means of action and expression, and engagement. For Assessment 1 (poster), students were able to represent knowledge in a visual way when analysing sustainability issues in a city of their preference. Meanwhile, with Assessment 2 (report), students demonstrated knowledge in a written manner when finding solutions to them. In both assessments, students had the chance to choose and apply concepts of their preferences. Peer assessment is demonstrated when students work in small groups, understand the assessment rubric and mark exemplars.

How we measured efficacy:

In the academic years 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24, there has been an improvement in the grades for both forms of assessment. In Assessment 1, grades were 48.56 to 49.44 and 52.68, respectively, whilst for Assessment 2 these scores were, 49.45 to 52.65 and 58.15, respectively.

In the last three years, student module evaluation registered nearly 4.2 out of 5, and students shared positive written feedback.

'But what does this mean?' – Student Understanding of Assessment Criteria

Institution: Aston University

Primary Contacts: Gayatri Patel

Discipline / subject: Law

Academic level: Second year undergraduate

Our innovation:

In order to tackle the often-perceived foreignness of the assessment criteria, I designed and delivered an assessment review workshop for a class of 70 students, on an optional module. The aim of the workshop was to create a sense of ownership of the assessment criteria, and to develop the confidence amongst the cohort of not only understanding the marking criteria, but also - confidently understanding their own level of work, and how to implement the feedback given to them in future assessments.

During the workshop, we worked through the assessment criteria, focusing on key terminologies, and applying the criteria on sample assessment papers. The second half of the workshop gamified the assessment criteria and regulations, whereby students were invited to be assessors and examiners in an undergraduate exam board, where the marks on the papers were disputed. Students are often wary about their understanding of the assessment criteria. Often, terminology such as 'critical analysis' and 'evaluate' can seem foreign, which in turn - inhibits their confidence with engaging with their assessment, but - also their feedback. In addition, it prevents student ownership of the assessment, and the opportunity to feed forward into their future assessments.

How we measured efficacy:

I have a set of data set from the previous year, before the change was implemented in the module. I then had a set of data set for the completion rates for the module for when the module was assessed. In addition, I sought anonymous feedback before and after the assessment review workshop, as well as after their assessment for the module. The metrics in the improvements of the grades on this module, aligned with the qualitative feedback reviewed for the workshop.

A specific formative assessment rubric for International Postgraduate students

Institution: University of Hull

Primary Contacts: Andrew Holmes

Discipline / subject: Education Studies

Academic level: Postgraduate

Our innovation:

Development and use of a specific formative assessment rubric for use in a taught postgraduate module with a high number of international students, and a large teaching and assessment team.

We wanted to both counter contract plagiarism through an authentic assignment that would be very difficult for an 'essay mill' to write and to create authentic assessment, one with real-world relevance that tested students' knowledge and understanding requiring students to learn new knowledge from their engagement with the assessment task itself as well as the accompanying assessment/feedback processes. We used a different rubric for the formative [ungraded] feedback. This was specifically designed to provide formative feedback in areas we felt the students needed to develop a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the requirements of M-Level work. It promoted student understanding of the assessment, and the standard and level of work required.

How we measured efficacy:

We received very positive comments from students, for example; "this really helped me to understand what was required in order to achieve a good grade" and "the formative feedback showed me that my referencing sources, quality and quantity needed to be improved, so I spend a lot more time reading, and practising how to reference."



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