

## ASSESSMENT WORKLOAD EQUIVALENCE GUIDE

### BACKGROUND

Curriculum Design principles are being implemented at the point of programme approval/re-approval with a view to enhance students' learning experience and improve the working lives of staff. In summary, modules should normally be of 20 credit points or more, have up to four learning outcomes and no more than 2 items\* of assessment. Programme teams will also be encouraged to ensure equity and consistency in assessment workload across modules of the same level and credit worth.

This guide has been constructed to support the process of assessment design, and to help ensure consistency of student effort commensurate with the credit value of the module. Nonetheless, it is not meant to be overly prescriptive as the demands and preparation time of assessed work can vary considerably depending on the nature, context and level of that work, and also the differing work rates of individual students.

Word count equivalence is traditionally used as a workload indicator but it must also be acknowledged that allocating word count equivalency to practical or non-traditional assessments is challenging. Programme teams are therefore encouraged to share and discuss their assessment strategies, to determine appropriate workloads/work hours for their subject-specific contexts, stages and programme levels. This guide is aimed at supporting such discussion.

This guide includes examples of word count equivalency for commonly used assessment methods but also suggests notional assessment work hours/preparation as a proportion of the notional learning hours for the module. Independent study contributes to the majority of learning hours for a given module. Work undertaken during this time may include background reading, reflection, preparation for seminars or tutorials, online activity, follow-up work, wider practice as well as assessment tasks. The proportion of notional learning hours for the preparation and completion of assessment tasks is set at 20% i.e. 40 hours for a 20 credit module. Assessment work hours will include e.g. gathering, reading and organising information, drafting plans, writing-up/assembly, editing, revision or rehearsal, and delivery time i.e. delivering a presentation or completing an exam.

5 credit workload examples have been offered to support staff in designing staged assessment methods comprising multiple assessment tasks\* spread over a semester or academic year. The small assessment tasks comprise the building blocks of an assessment item and collectively assess the module learning outcomes.

Note: many of the assessment types can be scaled up for 20 or more credits but scaling up may be impractical in some cases (e.g. presentations) due to large student numbers.

## MODULE SIZE AND WORKLOADS

20 Credit Module		
<b>200</b> notional learning hours (comprises contact time, directed study, independent study including assessment preparation)	Assessment learning hours/preparation constitutes approx. <b>20%</b> of notional module learning hours	<b>40 hours</b> notional assessment work hours  <b>4000</b> word count equivalence

### Assessment equivalence examples:

Assessment Type	WCE	<u>Notional</u> Assessment Work Hours	Credits
Written essay	1000 words	10 h	5
Exam / test	1 hour	10 h	5
Reflective journal/log	1000 words	10 h	5
Lab/practical report	1000 words	10 h	5
Group assignment	750 words per member	10 h	5
Individual presentation	15 minutes	20 h	10
Viva/oral exam	20-30 minutes	20 h	10
Small Group presentation	10 minutes per member	20 h	10
Portfolio of evidence	6000 words	40 h	20
Research proposal, small project	4000 words	40 h	20
Research project/dissertation	8000 words	80 h	40

Note: where there is more than one item of assessment per module, the assessment workload will be divided between items, for example:

Item 1: 2 hour exam (measures LO 1&2), item 2: 2000 word essay (measures LO 3&4) for 20 credits.

In relation to a staged/cumulative assessment where there is more than one assessment task within a single assessment item, the assessment workload will be divided across the multiple tasks, for example:

Item 1: staged assessment comprising 3 tasks (100%) for 20 credits.

- 1 hour class test (foundation knowledge before placement)
- 1000 word reflective log (reflections of placement experience)
- 30 minute viva (synthesis of experience and application of theory to practice)

(3 tasks are interrelated to measure all LO)

**\* Further guidance on assessment items and tasks:**

**Assessment Items**

Different items of assessment measure different learning outcomes within a module. As a general rule of thumb, a single learning outcome should not be double-assessed however, you may wish to triangulate students' performance across two assessment methods if there are both cognitive and practical components within one learning outcome. This may also be a professional body requirement.

**Assessment Tasks**

One item of assessment can be broken down into smaller staged/cumulative tasks (deliverables) as long as the tasks are complementary and ultimately stitch together to measure the same learning outcomes. A [patchwork text](#) assessment is a good example. A staged approach can allow the assessment workload to be distributed over the semester or year and can enable timely feedback between each task. This formative feedback could also be generated by students as a peer review exercise, helping them to appraise their own work.

Suggested guidelines follow a review of assessment tariffs from across the sector and have been influenced by:

Bloxham, S and Boyd, P., 2007. *Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education: a practical guide*, England: Open University Press.

Galvin, A; Noonan, E and O'Neill, G., 2012. *Assessment: Assessment workload and equivalences*. UCD Teaching and Learning Resources. Available at: [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2529/UCD\\_workload\\_and\\_equivalences.pdf](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2529/UCD_workload_and_equivalences.pdf) (Accessed 30.11.17)