

UMF Review on Assessment 2017: Overview

July 2017

Introduction to the UMF Review on Assessment and Key Principles

University of Northampton has recently approved a series of proposals emerging from a broad, institution-wide consultative review of its provisions on assessment. The review has been based on a number of key principles that are designed to:

- Increase academic ownership of assessment practice, to ensure that assessments are based on sound pedagogic principles within the broader ABL framework and clearly linked to subject content and learning outcomes
- Remove overly prescriptive rules around assessment volume and weightings, to encourage more innovative assessment design and facilitate assessments more closely aligned to subject content and learning outcomes
- Reduce the assessment burden placed on our students, with the aim of increasing student achievement, student retention and progression and student satisfaction
- Align our assessment volume with practice in the sector
- Rationalise learning outcomes, to ensure clear constructive alignment between content, learning outcomes and assessment and to ensure that learning outcomes remain achievable through reduced volume of assessment

The changes are further designed to ensure that the University Modular Framework (UMF) remains fit for purpose in guaranteeing and maintaining standards, particularly in respect of grading and confirming that students have met the Programme Learning outcomes and address over-assessment, as identified by a sector comparison and through a number of External Examiners annual reports. Finally, these changes will ensure that all students will receive a meaningful entitlement to engage with key strategic objectives around employability and our Changemaker in the Curriculum initiative.



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Summary of Changes

The main changes around assessment can be detailed as follows:

- In relation to Level 6 awards, a reduced number of programme learning outcomes (normal maximum of 12)
- A rationalisation of learning outcomes categories from 3 to 2:
 - Subject-Specific Knowledge, Understanding and Application
 - Employability and Changemaker Skills
- A reduced number of module learning outcomes:
 - Normally no more than 4 for 10 credit modules
 - Normally no more than 6 for 20-40 credit modules
 - Normally no more than 8 for 40-80 credit modules

Some flexibility exists for modules with 40 credits

- Learning Outcomes will be clearly and explicitly written to academic level to enable the application of a new set of common undergraduate grade criteria to aid progression between levels. Assessments will therefore be marked on whether or not the learning outcomes have been achieved and the level of expertise demonstrated in the submission. Feedback on academic or professional quality will also be provided as standard.
- New limits on the number of items of assessment:
 - Normally no more than 2 for 10 credit modules
 - Normally no more than 3 for modules of 20 credits and above
 - Exceptions to be on the basis of academic discussion
- An approximate reduction of 25% in assessment volume across the board, except for dissertations and principal modules. New limits to operate as 'maximums' rather than required amounts.
- Assessment volume to be measured through its relative weighting as part of the overall number of module hours allocated for assessment (25% of total module hours)



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- Changes will be reflected in rationalised Programme and Module Specification Templates. Other changes to the templates include a clear mapping of Programme to Module learning outcomes; a clear statement in respect of the learning and teaching strategy being Active Blended Learning, in line with [an agreed University definition](#); and categorisation of module hours to reflect the ABL methodology (contact hours – subdivided into face-to-face and online, and guided independent study hours (including hours for assessment)).
- Broader range of assessment instruments in line with current University assessment codes
- Clear guidance to support group assessments

Implementation and Consultation Process

Now the new provisions have been approved by the University Senate, all Undergraduate Programme Teams at the University of Northampton will be working to realign their programmes and modules to the new framework during the 2017-2018 academic year, with a view to these changes being implemented for all undergraduate students, irrespective of academic level, from September 2018.

Staff will make the changes and consult with all stakeholders – students, PSRBs, External Examiners and EWO partners in order to complete this process by April 2018 in line with the University's quality assurance processes.

This process will be repeated during the 2018-2019 academic year for all Postgraduate programmes.

Your programme team will be contacting you to involve you in this rationalisation process. They should be your primary point of contact should you have any questions about the implications of this process.



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