



Assessment Handbook
Enhancing Practice
January 2005

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Preamble

The purpose of this Handbook is to make available to programme teams material intended to support and encourage the development and implementation of assessment strategies which offer a wide range of assessment methods. In so doing it reflects the University College's commitment to providing students with a greater range of assessment, thus enhancing their learning experience whilst ensuring the quality of the College's awards. Consequently this document provides a digest of the relevant College policies and procedures relating to assessment, along with guidance on the design and use of assessment methods and tools.

The first section of the document seeks to draw together the principles and practice of assessment procedures within the University College, combining elements of all relevant resources into one convenient and comprehensive guide.¹ The second section of this document offers a series of generic descriptions and tips for a range of assessment methods and tools.

The Handbook has been developed and produced by the Academic Standards Unit (ASU) in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (LTEU) and with academic colleagues. It was approved by the Academic Standards Committee in February 2005 and will be reviewed and updated periodically. Currently the Handbook is published on the ASU website and will be linked to exemplars of assessment tools described in this document, which are models of good practice, and for which the LTEU will be responsible. These exemplars will be uploaded onto the LTEU website during the remainder of the academic year 2004-5.

It is hoped that the creation of a bank of examples of good practice will encourage increased sharing of experience of the practicalities of planning and implementing assessment strategies. Hard copies of the Handbook can be obtained from ASU.

**The Academic Standards Unit.
The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit**

March 2005

¹ The policies and procedures on assessment can be found in the *Assessment Policy, Policies and Procedures relating to the Conduct of Examinations*, *Generic Assessment Criteria for Undergraduates Level 1 to 3*, *Guidance for the Validation/Revalidation of Programmes*, *External Examiners Handbook*, *Guidance on Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)*, *Programme Quality Monitoring Handbook*, and the *Guidance on Placement Learning and Student Procedures* documentation.

SECTION 1 – Assessment: Principles and Procedures

1 Purposes

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA (2000))² has outlined a number of key purposes associated with assessment. In summary, assessment provides:

- A general measurement of students' abilities in the specified field of study and a means by which they are graded and progress
- The basis for judgments regarding students' readiness to qualify for awards and where appropriate to demonstrate competence to practise (professionally)
- A primary tool for measuring students' success in achieving learning outcomes for a course, module or programme
- The measurement of students' achievement of key skills
- Evidence of the effectiveness and/or possible shortcomings in the design of particular courses, modules or programmes.

In order to achieve the above purposes, the structure of assessment must allow for a certain amount of variation. The University College recognises the need to create flexible assessment and encourages methods and procedures which reflect and support the variety of teaching approaches currently employed within the higher education sector. The employment of a variety of teaching and assessment methods works well with the College's policy on widening participation³. It caters for a range of learners' requirements, offers students a variety of options for demonstrating their abilities and ultimately provides them with a more comprehensive learning experience. The use of a variety of assessment methods stimulates student learning, and can also provide those students who may find particular types of assessment difficult with alternative opportunities to excel.

The mode of assessment within a course, module or programme can vary, being either:

- **Terminal** – measuring students' achievement of the learning outcomes at the end of a particular course, module or programme; or
- **Continuous** – assessing students continuously throughout the learning process.

The QAA (2000)⁴ describe assessment as having three central functions, namely diagnostic, formative and summative. These functions are generally defined as:

2 Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 3)

3 The issue of widening participation is covered in detail in the University College's *Assessment Policy and Widening Participation Strategy*.

4 Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 3)

- **Diagnostic Assessment** - primarily assesses students' ability to perform within a course, module or programme, and is therefore a valuable tool for highlighting possible strengths and weaknesses. The evidence produced through diagnostic assessment allows problem areas to be addressed and resolved by students and by staff at an early stage.
- **Formative Assessment** – does not usually contribute towards overall assessment grades. It is used principally as a form of continuous assessment, enabling students' progress and achievement to be monitored at frequent intervals throughout the course of study, therefore helping to provide a more balanced view of their progress. Formative assessment often takes the form of open ended methods such as seminar presentations and coursework (although these methods may be used as part of the overall assessment grade), and can involve peer and self-assessment.
- **Summative Assessment** – measures the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes of a course, module or programme, and provides the basis for recommendations of progression and qualification for awards. It also provides a gauge of how successful the learning and teaching process has been in achieving the original programme aims and outcomes. Summative assessment generally takes the form of formal or terminal assessment such as examinations⁵, coursework, presentations and projects.

These three functions of assessment do not however work independently of each other. As the QAA point out "Any assessment instrument can, and often does, involve more than one of [the above] elements...for example, much coursework is formative in that it provides an opportunity for students to be given feedback on their level of attainment, but also often counts towards the credit being accumulated for a summative statement of achievement. An end-of-module or end-of-programme examination is designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment the student has reached. Both formative and summative assessment can have a diagnostic function. Assessment primarily aimed at diagnosis is intrinsically formative, though it might, rarely, contribute towards a summative judgement."⁶

Regardless of the form of assessment being employed its criteria must remain focused on the learning outcomes outlined in the validation document. Ensuring the relevance of assessment criteria will enable students to prepare more effectively and inevitably improve their performance. The link between assessment and learning outcomes must therefore be made transparent in the assessment information provided for students.

⁵ Where this term is used within this document, it refers specifically to written examinations.

⁶ QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 3)

2 Principles

The overarching principle of assessment as outlined by the QAA, is that institutions should strive to ensure there is "...consistent implementation of rigorous assessment practices which ensure that the academic/professional standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this."⁷

In light of this there are several issues which must be considered when designing assessments so as to ensure academic standards are upheld and students receive every opportunity to demonstrate their achievements.

The key issues regarding the maintenance of the quality and effectiveness of assessment are as follows:

2.1 Validity

The principle of validity can be broken down into two main areas:

2.1.1 Relevance

Assessment must test those areas/skills which are central to the aims and outcomes of the course, module or programme. In ensuring the validity of assessment the QAA have recommended tutors consider carefully "...the range and types of assessment used and how these measure appropriately the achievement by students of those skills, areas of knowledge and attributes identified as intended learning outcomes for the module or programme, and allow the strengths and weaknesses of the students to be demonstrated;"⁸. It is important for students, staff and examiners (both internal and external) that this link is transparent in order to sustain an effective assessment process.

2.1.2 Discrimination

Assessment must be designed to measure students at the appropriate level, and criteria for such levels must be clearly defined in the information provided for students, staff and examiners. The method and marking criteria set out for assessments must enable examiners to differentiate between candidates' performance in terms of pass or fail decisions, and must allow for appropriate grading of students' level of achievement in relation to the learning outcomes of the course, module or programme.

7 QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 5)

8 QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 5)

2.2 Equity

Ensuring the equity of the assessment process requires that monitoring takes place to ensure the practices of fairness and practicality are upheld consistently. These practices are described below:

2.2.1 Fairness

To ensure fairness within the assessment process it must be applied equitably and consistently to all students. Programme directors must make sure that principles and policies associated with assessment are implemented consistently across the University College. As stated by the QAA, institutions must ensure “the robustness of arrangements to monitor, evaluate and demonstrate the fairness of assessments.”⁹

No bias should be allowed to influence the process, and no individual or group should be disadvantaged by assessment procedures, including those from minority ethnic groups. Modifications may need to be made to assessment tools in order to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities which, as the QAA state, can include “...a wide range of impairments including physical and mobility difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health problems.”¹⁰ The precepts laid down by the QAA (1999)¹¹ highlight the importance of developing consistent guidelines, deciding on what form these modifications will take and implementing them. They should offer reasonable adjustments which provide students with disabilities with equal opportunities to participate in assessment processes, without generating any unfair advantages. These adjustments must also take account of the University College’s own Policies¹².

2.2.2 Practicality

The scheduling and quantity of assessment must be manageable for both students and staff. Assessment must be used to support the learning process; therefore tutors should employ assessments which demonstrate reasonable expectations of students, consistent with the needs of the course, module or programme. In considering issues of practicality, it is useful to develop an assessment process which includes a variety of formative and continuous summative assessment. By reducing the amount of terminal assessment, the clustering of assessments at any point in a course can be prevented,

9 QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 6)

10 QAA, (1999), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 3 – Students with disabilities*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 5)

11 QAA, (1999), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 3 – Students with disabilities*. Gloucester: QAA. (p. 5)

12 For further details see CCCUC Disability Statements and PPE documents, available on the CCCUC website.

and so reduce the pressure placed on both students and staff. By spreading assessments over a period of time, students will be more able both to assimilate the guidance given through tutors' feedback¹³ and to implement any necessary changes.

2.3 Reliability

The main issues regarding reliability of assessment as stated by the QAA, are "...the consistent use of agreed marking and grading schemes, and moderation arrangements."¹⁴ Assessment must therefore produce repeatable results and judgements, which can only be achieved by ensuring that the process demonstrates the following:

2.3.1. Rigour

Assessment procedures must be regularly and thoroughly evaluated and monitored in the interests of equity. By ensuring the validity, equity and explicitness of assessment tutors can enhance the reliability of their methods and results. In addition, the procedures for monitoring and reviewing/evaluating assessment outlined in the *Assessment Policy* (2004) must be adhered to in strict terms.

2.3.2. Moderation

Moderation is a vital part of the assessment process, ensuring that the fairness, rigour and relevance of the system are maintained and evaluated on a regular basis. The processes of moderation will be covered in greater detail within the assessment tool sections below.

2.4 Explicitness

The key to effective and reliable assessment is transparency; students and staff must have a clear understanding of exactly what they are expected to do, and how this is to be achieved. As the QAA assert, "...information and guidance on assessment [must be] clear, accurate, consistent and accessible to all staff, students, placement or practice assessors and external examiners;"¹⁵. The implementation of these practices within the University College is covered in the *Assessment Policy*, and in greater detail within the various *Procedures and Policies relating to the Conduct of Examinations* (PPEs) available in the Quality Information File (QUIF) and on the ASU website. All information relevant to assessment i.e. clear grading criteria, the relationship between assessment and the learning outcomes, and the assessment procedures implemented in the course, module, or programme

13 For further guidelines on the timetabling of assessments, tutors should refer to the CCCUC *Guidance for the Validation/Revalidation of Programmes* document (2004/5 edition).

14 QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p.6)

15 QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p.5)

should be circulated (usually within the student handbook), well in advance of the date of the assessment.

3 Assessment Strategies

Following the implementation of the *Assessment Policy* in March 2004, it is now a requirement that each validated and/or revalidated programme has a clearly defined assessment strategy in place which is consistent with the University College's *Assessment Policy* and *Examination Regulations and Conventions* (for the appropriate academic level). This strategy, known as a Programme Assessment Strategy is in essence a definition of the relationship between the learning and teaching processes used within a course, module or programme, the learning outcomes, and the methods of assessment used. It is important that the assessment strategy includes consideration of both generic and programme-specific assessment criteria.

An effective assessment strategy should provide evidence that:

- an appropriate range of assessment is offered
- assessment will enable course aims and learning outcomes to be measured and achieved
- there are clear criteria for assessment which distinguish between different categories of achievement
- there are efficient mechanisms in place for feedback to students, relating to both formative and summative functions of assessment
- any proposed modifications to general University College Regulations and Conventions are clearly delineated.¹⁶

The University College's assessment documentation¹⁷ offers staff detailed instructions regarding the creation of assessment strategies. The key points drawn from this documentation regarding the content of such strategies are that staff must ensure:

- The purpose and methods of assessment are clearly described, and unambiguously linked to the learning outcomes
- Students are provided with explicit instructions concerning the weighting, word limit (or equivalent), and length of each assessment
- The assessment tools used suit the course, module or programme, and provide adequate opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes
- The assessments test students at an appropriate academic level, producing accurate measurements of the learning outcomes, and demonstrating students' progression through the course, module or programme
- The timing and quantity of assessments are clearly expressed, including details of the arrangements for submission, return and feedback for each assignment

¹⁶ More detailed instructions for the creation of effective assessment strategies can be found in the CCCUC *Guidance for the Validation/Revalidation of programmes* handbook (2004/5 edition).

¹⁷ Specifically the CCCUC *Assessment Policy* and the *Guidance for the Validation/Revalidation of Programmes* handbook (2004/5 edition).

- There are clear and accessible assessment criteria for all levels within the course, module or programme, insuring any special assessment or credit requirements are illustrated
- The marking criteria for each method and level of assessment are stated clearly, and are consistent with learning outcomes, University College's *Assessment Policy*, and appropriate general subject benchmarks
- The rules and regulations for progression, awards and classifications are explained, including details of the conventions for the award of qualifications
- There is evidence of the policies and procedures in place to ensure the validity, equity, explicitness and reliability of such assessment
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating assessment are described, including information on the moderation process, extension procedures, the role and responsibility of external examiners, penalties and procedures concerning plagiarism and cheating, and appeal procedures (including concessions evidence)
- Students receive sufficient information on the guidance and support available to them in relation to assessment
- Details of the arrangements for students with special needs are provided, including reasonable adjustments to assessment processes and methods in line with University College's Policies
- Any variations from the General Examination Conventions of the University College are in line with the *Assessment Policy*, and include detailed information on:
 - "Requirements to pass course / module / programme
 - Assessment of practice, where relevant
 - Resubmission of assessed work and resitting examinations
 - Criteria for and procedures for dealing with failure
 - Compensation of failed courses
 - Marking arrangements
 - Eligibility for an award."¹⁸

The QAA (2000)¹⁹ recommend that assessment strategies also include, where necessary, a rationalisation for the balance between academic and practical elements within the programme. As such, those programmes where practice plays an integral role in the learning and teaching process must include in their strategies descriptions of the arrangements for any such assessment i.e. how it will be assessed, and by whom. The criteria for these assessments must conform not only to the University College's own *Regulations and Conventions*, *Assessment Policy* and *PPE* documents, but must also fulfil the necessary requirements of any regulatory or professional bodies associated with the subject/discipline. The assessment strategy must therefore inform students of the requirements for the awarding of appropriate professional/regulatory qualifications, and how these will be met by the College's assessment procedures. It should include, where appropriate, an outline of the processes of selection and training of practice

¹⁸ Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC). (2004), *Assessment Policy*. Canterbury: CCCUC. (p. 9)

¹⁹ QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA.

assessors/supervisors from outside the University College who are involved in carrying out assessments.

When constructing the assessment strategy, the following information should be included:

- The differences between formative and summative methods of assessment used in the course, module or programme, and details of what students will be expected to produce for each.
- What students are expected to know as a result of each year's study and a list of the skills and knowledge required in relation to the learning outcomes.
- Where students and examiners can obtain the full versions of University College Regulations, Conventions and Policies relating to assessment
- How the award is structured generally, including an explanation of what students will receive as part of the qualification i.e. professional recognition.
- The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the assessment process i.e. Board of Examiners, Faculty, tutors, external/internal examiners, practice assessors.
- What role, if any, attendance will play in the assessment process and grading procedures.
- The relevance, if any, which AP(E)L²⁰ qualifications have on the course, module or programme and assessment processes (covered in greater detail below).

The assessment strategy allows tutors to communicate effectively the structure and requirements of all methods of assessment for their course, module or programme. As such, it is important that this information is clearly laid out and is readily available to students, staff and examiners.

It is important that assessment strategies allow for the designing out of plagiarism, that is, to create and implement specific programme and course assessment initiatives which are known to reduce the incidence of inadvertent and/or deliberate plagiaristic activity (Carroll 2001)²¹. Some of these strategies involve placing emphasis on certain kinds of well-known summative assessment techniques, for example terminal examinations. However, a range of other assessment tools are plagiarism-resistant, e.g. annotated bibliographies, posters or information searches. In addition to specific assessment tools, courses and programmes can also factor in specific anti-plagiarism procedures.

4 Aims, Learning Outcomes & Assessment Criteria

20 For full details regarding the University College's arrangements and procedures for AP(E)L see the policy and guidance documentation (2004/5 editions) available on the College's website, or alternatively contact the ASU's Manager of Academic Partnerships.

21 Carroll, J. and Appleton, J., (2001), *Designing out opportunities for plagiarism*. Available at: <http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/site/guide2.asp>

[Accessed February 2005]

In creating the specifications for any course, module or programme, three main forms of descriptor must always be presented. These are: **aims**, **learning outcomes** and **assessment criteria**. **Aims** give the broadest overview of the purposes and learning experiences involved in a course, module or programme. **Learning outcomes** set out what students are expected to be able to achieve in terms of the specific areas of knowledge and skills which will be covered during the course, module or programme. **Assessment criteria** further define these learning outcomes, describing how they will be judged through the assessment process.

4.1 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes and assessment are symbiotic, as only those outcomes which are assessed can be considered as learning outcomes for a course, module or programme. In turn, assessment tools have to be appropriate and able to test/assess the learning outcomes (see Section 3 below).

The main characteristics of effective learning outcomes are:

- They describe the knowledge and skills tutors expect students to have acquired by the completion of a course, module or programme.
- They embody the educational purposes and values of the overall learning experience within a programme of study, and provide the strategic framework for the process of learning.
- They reflect the achievement necessary for each level of performance within a course, module or programme assessment task.
- They are linked to level descriptors²² correspondent to a credit rating or an award qualification, and incorporate the features and requirements of each particular programme or award.
- They are specific and measurable (the course, module or programme outline and assessment strategy must detail how these outcomes are to be achieved and assessed).

A more detailed account of the purposes and construction of learning outcomes can be found in the CCCUC *Guidance for the Validation/Revalidation of Programmes* (2004/05) document.

The demand for reliability within summative assessment techniques has resulted in a bias against the use of learning outcomes which cannot be assessed with a high degree of reliability. There is a resistance to the use of assessment within some approaches, such as group work, or a tendency to give them a low weighting as with presentations. Knowledge based outcomes are more easily and reliably assessed than those based on analysis and application.

When considering the introduction of new or alternative forms of assessment there is often a tension between achieving validity *and*

²² These level descriptions can be found in the QAA (2001) *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* document, and the SEEC (2003) *Credit Level Descriptors for Further & Higher Education*.

reliability. Elton (2002)²³ proposes that the application of two simple principles would help ease the valid-reliable dilemma:

- 1 Where assessment can be used validly and reliably then grades should be given.
- 2 Where assessment can be used validly but not reliably then it should be graded as pass or fail (this would be achieved on the basis of knowledgeable and trained examiners (Eisner 1985)²⁴), e.g. for the assessment of practice. This is in recognition of the fact that there are some learning outcomes that are valuable but cannot be assessed both validly and reliably.

In more traditionally reliable assessments, summative and formative forms of assessment are usually kept separate. The opposite is the case for new kinds of assessment. Knight (2002)²⁵ argues, that summative assessment, should be restricted to what can be 'reliably, affordably and fairly assessed' and that other curricular aspects, in particular skills development, should be formatively assessed.

4.2 Assessment Criteria²⁶

The main characteristics of effective assessment criteria are:

- They expand on the learning outcomes, relating them to specific assessment tools, and thus ensuring the assessment is a valid measurement of the programme of study.
- They clearly outline for students and examiners what is expected for each specific assessment task.
- They are influenced primarily by the subject and level for which the assessment task is being used, although there are some generic criteria which can be employed throughout the institution.
- They define the assessment tool to which they are applied, describing what qualities and knowledge will be assessed, and what students must achieve to progress or to qualify for an award.
- They should provide the threshold standards for each assessment, illustrating the expectations for each level of performance.
- In fulfilling the above functions, assessment criteria provide invaluable information and guidance for students on preparing for and completing assessment tasks successfully.

23 Elton, L., (2002), *Principles for a Fair and Honest Approach to Assessing and Representing Students' Learning and Achievement*. York: LTSN Generic Centre. [Available on-line at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp> (see Assessment Category)]

24 Eisner, E., (1985), *The Art of Educational Evaluation*. London: Falmer.

25 Knight, P., (2002), 'Summative Assessment in Higher Education: practices in disarray', *Studies in Higher Education*. 27 (3), 275 – 286. London: Taylor & Francis.

26 The University College's Generic Assessment Criteria grids for written assignments (levels 1-3) are available on the ASU website.

5 Assessment Methods

Assessment methods encompass all possible forms of assessment tools used throughout the University College at course, modular and at a programme level. These methods include assessments intended to be both summative and/or formative. The distinction between these two functions of assessment should be made explicit by the assessment strategy for each course, module or programme.

The methods for assessing student performance can be broadly summarised under two headings, **examination** and **coursework**. Both categories of assessment tool have particular functions within the learning experience of students and can be used to evaluate different aspects of learning outcomes.

The main functions of these types of assessment are:

- **Examinations** – These assessments require students to produce work within a fixed time-frame, whilst under formal examination conditions. There are a variety of forms which examination assessments can take e.g. seen, unseen, and open book. Examinations are normally anonymously marked.
- **Coursework** – This form encompasses a variety of more open-ended assessment methods e.g. essays, projects, portfolios, individual studies, recitals, exhibitions and posters. This category of assessment is not in all cases marked anonymously. However the University College does encourage anonymous marking of coursework where possible.

Within the University College there are also two main types of oral assessment employed:

- **Oral Tests or Presentations** – These are generally considered by the College to be an extension of coursework, and are therefore not anonymously marked.
- **Viva Voce Examination** – This tool is generally used within the College to aid in decisions regarding borderline (written) assessment cases.

The assessment methods described here will be covered in more detail below.

In selecting assessment methods from the above categories, tutors should bear in mind the appropriateness of each type, namely whether it will effectively assess the learning outcomes they have included in the validation document and the stated assessment strategy. As a result, the choice of assessment tool will in part be inevitably determined by the nature of the learning outcomes which the task is intended to assess.

The University College recommends that tutors consider employing a range of assessment methods to ensure students are offered a comprehensive learning experience which takes into account issues of widening participation (as described in Section 1).

5.1 Assessment of Certificated Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)

Full details of the mechanisms put in place to enable students to gain recognition of experiential and prior certificated learning are set out in the University College's *Policy and Guidance for the Assessment of Experiential and Prior Certificated Learning*, which can be found on the ASU website

Staff are reminded that where AP(E)L is used for credit exemption within a course, module or programme (as opposed to gaining a student entry with advanced standing), it is an assessment matter. Moreover, students must demonstrate that any experience for which they seek to gain accreditation can be articulated within the academic framework of their studies and against the learning outcomes of that part of the course, module or programme from which they are seeking credit exemption.

The scope and proposed content of portfolios used to make these judgements must be explained to students in the same way as any assessment tool, and completed portfolios must be considered an assessment activity and treated accordingly, and should consequently be considered by the external examiner alongside other work.

6 Marking Schemes

A marking scheme is in essence an expansion of the assessment criteria, outlining in greater detail the way in which students will be assessed by each task. In creating a marking scheme, tutors should keep in mind that such schemes have several key functions within the assessment process:

- They describe the assessment procedures for specific tasks;
- They describe how the assessment will be judged, in terms of mark allocation, and weighting;
- They detail how the assessment criteria will be applied, and will provide evidence concerning the learning outcomes being assessed.
- They outline the marking procedure to be used for each assessment task i.e. first, second, blind, or anonymous marking;
- They contain both generic programme criteria, as well as those criteria specific to the assessment task;
- They illustrate what criteria must be achieved to qualify for each level of performance within the marking scheme i.e. pass, or distinction;
- They may contain a variety of acceptable responses to the assignment, relating to the assessment criteria and learning outcomes. This function of the marking scheme is primarily aimed at staff and examiners, and if included should not be accessible to students (except as part of the feedback process).

Students should also be made aware of the marking procedures used for assessment. Details of these procedures can be found in PPE 28.

7 Monitoring & Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of assessment forms an integral part of the University College's system of quality assurance²⁷, providing continuous and holistic review of assessment procedures and results, as required by the QAA (2000)²⁸. Programme directors are responsible for ensuring that regular feedback is collected on assessment procedures and results from students and external examiners as part of programme development activities. This information is produced through external examiners' reports and student evaluation, both formal and informal. The analysis produced through this feedback informs programme directors of the strengths and weaknesses of these assessment practices, and aids in producing subsequent action plans to evolve procedures.

In conjunction with the above quality assurance procedures, it is important that tutors individually take ownership of the monitoring and evaluation process. This is done through yearly reviews of assessment methods used in courses, modules or programmes, which evaluate each method's ability to measure successfully appropriate learning outcomes and produce reliable, valid and equitable results.

The employment of second marking practices within the University College allows programme teams to monitor the consistency and quality of assessments and their marking procedures.

Monitoring and evaluation processes must be built into assessment strategies and made transparent to staff and students through appropriate material, i.e. Validation documents, Programme Handbooks, and/or Student Handbooks.

8 Feedback on Assessment

The University College recognises feedback as integral to maintaining the quality and effectiveness of its learning and teaching processes. The *Assessment Policy* requires feedback to be provided on all returned coursework assignments, and where practicable to offer students informal feedback (written or verbal) when formal comments are not possible.

The provision of feedback is overseen by the Programme Director, who is responsible for ensuring consistent and coherent arrangements are implemented for this provision. It is important that staff and students fully understand the procedures surrounding feedback in advance of assessment.

²⁷ See CCCUC' *Programme Quality Monitoring Handbook* (2004/5) for further details on programme quality assurance procedures.

²⁸ See QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: section 6: Assessment of students, & section 7: Programme approval, monitoring and review*. Gloucester: QAA for further details.

The relevant documentation i.e. Programme Handbooks, should include information on:

- The schedule for return of summative assessment scripts, including dates for return of work, and the relevant arrangements for students to receive written feedback
- The relationship of feedback to each type of assessment tool, and
- The opportunities for informal discussion of feedback with staff, including any arrangements for oral feedback sessions.

Having put in place arrangements for the provision of feedback, due consideration must be given to its nature and content. The QAA state that "Institutions should ensure...appropriate feedback is provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement."²⁹ This precept highlights the function of feedback as a vital evaluative component in students' learning experience which, when provided formally, ensures assessments are both constructive and instructive (for staff and students).

The feedback generated by both formative and summative assessment should help to motivate students through evidence of their progress and strengths, and offer suggestions for the improvement of their academic performance. Formative assessment is in fact primarily a vehicle for providing students with feedback on their knowledge and skills, which is invaluable in preparing them for later summative tasks.

To ensure the quality and effectiveness of feedback procedures the University College has outlined in its *Assessment Policy* a number of principles which should be taken into account when writing formative and summative assessment feedback. In essence, these principles are:

- It should be timely, with every attempt made to return the work as early as possible;
- It should be individualised and specific, relating students' performance directly to the appropriate assessment criteria;
- It should be both positive and supportive, indicating to students their strengths as well as weaknesses, and offering guidance on improving subsequent assessment performances;
- It should be honest in its detailing of strengths and weaknesses, reflecting the level of achievement and the mark awarded;
- It should be manageable for staff; and
- It should use clear and concise language, enabling students easily to extract the salient points.

The principles outlined above provide a sound basis for constructing formal feedback, which students receive on assessment sheets returned with their assignments scripts. It is advisable to offer some form of informal feedback as a supplement to this process. Feedback is part of the learning process

²⁹ QAA, (2000) *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p.14)

itself, and as such requires forethought and careful planning by staff to ensure students benefit fully from it.

Informal feedback is generally verbal, and given either to individuals through tutorial sessions, or in a more generalised form to the entire group. Both forms allow students an opportunity to discuss feedback with tutors and their peers, encouraging them to participate in the evaluation of their progress, and consequently to engage more closely with the learning and teaching processes. To ensure students get as much as possible from assessment feedback, it is advisable to provide them with guidance before the assessment on how best to interpret and implement critical analysis and suggestions produced through the formal comments.

If students are to gain maximum advantage from the feedback offered they need to be encouraged to receive and act upon it. Personal Development Planning (PDP) provides students with encouragement to reflect on feedback about their progress. Action planning, as part of PDP, holds them accountable for seeking help guidance and support to improve on aspects of their work as required.

9 Information Provision

The University College recognises the need to provide consistent and explicit information on assessment procedures and processes used within its programmes. Tutors are encouraged to provide both students and examiners with the relevant resources.

The QAA recommend that in relation to assessment within Higher Education Institutions, there must be explicit and accessible information on:

- “the purpose, methods and schedule of assessment tasks during, and at the end, of a [course] module or programme of study;
- any role played by Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning and the processes involved;
- the criteria for assessment including, where appropriate, descriptors of expected standards of student attainment: what is expected in order to pass or to gain a particular grade or classification;
- what elements will, and which will not, count towards interim or final assessment and with what weighting or exemption procedures;
- the marking and grading conventions that will be used;
- the consequences of assessment, such as decisions about progression to the next level, final awards and the right of appeal;
- how and when assessment judgements are published;
- any opportunities for re-assessment.”³⁰

In addition it is advisable to include accessible information regarding:

- The arrangements for, and description of each assessment task;

³⁰ QAA, (2000), *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 6 – Assessment of students*. Gloucester: QAA. (p.16)

- The formative and/or diagnostic elements of tasks and their value in terms of students' learning experience;
- A definition of plagiarism and the possible consequences in relation to the plagiarising of other peoples' work.
- The procedures for the return of work, and the distribution of feedback to students, where appropriate;
- The rights of students in relation to appeals and concessions evidence procedures in place within the University College;
- The resources and guidance available to students, staff and examiners, including clear references where appropriate, to any external bodies or policies i.e. the QAA, SEEC, or SENDA.

SECTION 2 – Methods and Instruments of Assessment

1 Examinations

Examinations can be used as terminal assessment tools, measuring students' achievement at the end of each course, module or programme. They provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and issues covered, providing evidence of their achievement of learning outcomes. This type of assessment encourages students to exhibit a capacity for independent thought, for analysis and criticality and to demonstrate the ability to structure clear, concise and reasoned arguments whilst under time-constrained conditions. The main advantage of this form of assessment is its ability to test students' capacity to reflect upon, rather than simply reproduce the subjects taught during a course, module or programme.

There are however several constraints associated with this form of assessment. First, examination work is not normally returned to students³¹ and therefore cannot currently be considered to have a formative function. Some departments however operate the practice of providing feedback comments to students on request. Where examination feedback is not offered, the process of assessment can be less constructive for students than for example coursework.

Another constraint is that examinations judge students purely on their performance at a specific point in time. This may reduce the reliability of the assessment result, since it is less able to take into account the effect of outside influences i.e. personal or health issues which may affect students' performance at that time.

To ensure the quality and consistency of the University College's assessment processes, it is vital that in creating any assessment task staff comply with the guidelines provided in the Regulations and Conventions, and PPEs. The procedures for the preparation and approval of examination papers in particular, are outlined in PPE 20.

³¹ The University College's policy regarding the retention of examination papers is explained fully in PPE 21.

There are a variety of different styles of examination used within the University College. In creating an assessment strategy, tutors should consider the method which best suits the needs of their course, module or programme. Staff must take into consideration the possible advantages and/or constraints of each style of examination. A brief description of examination styles is set out below and includes some suggested advantages and constraints for each style.

The main types of examination are:

1.1 Unseen Examination

The unseen examination presents students with a series of unseen questions from which they must choose, and complete under formal examination conditions³² within the time allocated. There are generally two main types of question which can be used in unseen examinations:

- those questions which are given without any additional information or reference material; and
- those questions where tutors have incorporated reference material of some description i.e. a pamphlet, a journal article, or a case study. In this type of examination students are expected to digest the information presented and make use of it in their response. When using this style of question however, staff must ensure the accuracy and completeness of any material incorporated.

The questions used in unseen examinations may also on occasion be divided internally into sections to ensure students answer a question on each area under examination.

Unseen examinations can vary in length (from 1 to 3 hours duration) according to department and programme requirements. Whatever length is chosen, it must always be approved through the University College's programme validation process.

1.1.1 Advantages of unseen examinations:

- They are a method of assessment which is normally familiar to most students, who may therefore feel more confident in approaching the task.
- They test students' ability to apply the knowledge they have acquired to specific tasks or problems rather than simply repeating information.
- The revision process required for this method helps focus students' learning, encouraging a deeper understanding of the subject matter.
- They require students to answer questions under identical conditions, providing each student with an equal opportunity to complete the assessment task.

³² The formal conditions for examinations in the University College are described in full in the *Examination Regulations and Conventions* and PPE documents on the CCCUC website, and include information on the conditions imposed on those students taking examinations, and the invigilation and moderation processes undertaken by staff.

- Unseen examinations may allow for more sustained writing in the examination room on the selected topic(s).

1.1.2 Constraints:

- Those questions incorporating reference material naturally consume more of the students' time during the examination, requiring them to read the material and then respond to the question accordingly.
- The number of learning outcomes which can be assessed during the examination period where reading has to take place are limited, since students must have sufficient time to complete their reading and respond within the allotted time.
- Some students may find these examinations stressful or daunting since they generally involve working from memory.
- This method of assessment only allows students a limited time in which to consider their answer, and carry out relevant research in order to produce the best response possible.

1.2 Part-Seen Examination³³

In this style of examination students are given reference material to study before the assessment takes place. This material can include a variety of different information such as case studies, articles, or journals. When students enter the actual examination they are presented with a series of unseen questions to complete in relation to this material.

As with the unseen examinations, the length of part-seen examinations varies according to the requirements of the course, module or programme, and must be decided as part of the programme validation process.

1.2.1 Advantages of part-seen examinations:

- They eliminate the problem of allowing students time to digest unseen sources and respond to questions accordingly.
- They can therefore contain a greater number of questions, on the understanding that the students are familiar with the reference material.
- They provide students with prior knowledge of the area being assessed, allowing them to research the topic in more depth and therefore produce a more complete demonstration of their abilities.
- They reduce the need to rely on memorised information, helping those candidates who find unseen examinations stressful. This is especially pertinent for those students at level HE3 and above, for whom providing a suitably advanced response is made more difficult by the need to rely on memory.

³³ When using this style of examination, it is the responsibility of the Programme Director to issue any reference material in advance of the assessment date, and to check the completeness and accuracy of such material. They must provide the students with complete and explicit information concerning the material, including details of the arrangements for its use in the examination i.e. whether students will be permitted to take in annotated versions of the material, or whether they will be provided with a clean copy. Details of the University College Conventions concerning the use of pre-seen reference material in examinations can be found in PPE paper 20.

- They can reduce the element of chance involved in revising for unseen examination questions, therefore improving the validity and reliability of the assessment.

1.2.2 Constraints:

- They encourage students to focus their learning solely on the areas covered in questions they intend to answer.
- They thereby reduce the focused learning experience generated when students are required to revise all key subject areas covered within a course, module or programme.
- Arrangements must be made by staff for the provision of 'clean' versions of the reference material when the candidates sit the examination.
- In relation to assessment, staff workloads are increased through the need to monitor the inclusion and subsequent distribution of reference material in the examination questions. They must ensure the accuracy and completeness of the material included.

1.3 Open-Book Examination

In these types of examinations students are again presented with unseen questions under formal conditions, however they are permitted to take reference material into the examination venue. The reference material may take one of two main forms, either a textbook (or alternative reference material), or the students' own notes. The types of material allowable must be specified in the programme validation documents, and made explicit to all students and staff in advance of the assessment.

Open-book examinations often comprise of tasks based on a problem or argument to which the student is then required to respond, employing their knowledge of the subject and making use of the reference material as appropriate.

1.3.1 Advantages of open-book examinations:

- They test not only students' capacity to construct a coherent response to the assessment task, but also require a demonstration of their ability to use resource material effectively in doing so.
- By allowing students access to relevant reference material open-book examinations reduce the need to memorise information, and can therefore allow students to concentrate on demonstrating their ability to understand and apply this information to the question.
- By providing students with reference material prior to the assessment, it may give them greater confidence when taking these examinations and therefore produce a more accurate account of their achievements.
- Students can use revision time more constructively, focusing on reinforcing their understanding of the subject rather than attempting to memorised information.

1.3.2. Constraints:

- Where textbooks are allowed staff must either ensure students are provided with clean copies of the appropriate text or make clear in the assessment strategy any alternative arrangements i.e. allowing students to make notes on the text. Programme Directors are responsible for ensuring the examination office is fully aware of what will be permitted. These additional arrangements can, if not monitored and adhered to strictly, jeopardise the reliability and equity of the assessment process.
- It is possible that arbitrary factors may be introduced into the process i.e. whether students have the appropriate material, or whether any notes used are the student's own.
- Staff must provide students with more detailed guidance on what they may or may not take into the examination.
- Those examinations which allow students' notes can be unreliable, as without careful instructions from tutors some students may end up taking incorrect material with them into the examination room. This might put such students at a disadvantage and consequently endanger the equity of the assessment.
- Physically, these examinations may require more space to compensate for the extra material students are required to take in with them.

1.4 Multiple Choice Examinations

Students are expected to provide concise responses to questions asked. The questions posed each have a number of possible answers from which students must choose, consisting of a correct response and a series of 'distractors'. It is important to remember that the distractors must be both credible and yet clearly distinguishable as incorrect in the marking process. Multiple Choice examinations can be used either as formal examinations or as class tests (which may be classified as part of coursework assessment), and are generally of short duration (e.g. 1 hour).

1.4.1 Advantages of multiple choice examinations:

- It is possible to assess a greater number of learning outcomes and therefore obtain, within the time-constraints, a more comprehensive measurement of students' achievement.
- They can test students' ability to think quickly under pressure, and are less concerned with examination technique.
- They can be easier to modify in order to test students at the appropriate level.
- This form can reduce the amount of marking time required from internal examiners, and decrease some of the subjectivity which can be involved in marking other styles of examination.

1.4.2 Constraints:

- There is a possibility that students may guess the correct answer rather than putting forward a reasoned and deliberate response. This could result in a less reliable assessment of students' knowledge

and understanding of course, module and/or programme learning outcomes.

- This can be a relatively labour intensive form of assessment for staff, requiring the creation of convincing distractors for each question or task.
- The problem of the workload for tutors can be reduced by staff re-using multiple choice questionnaires, however in itself this raises the issue of plagiarism as a result of recycling questions.
- The shortness of students' responses does not generally allow for the demonstration of more in-depth knowledge and understanding of a topic. This may result in the production of a shallower and less comprehensive measurement of students' achievement.

The examinations mentioned above are the main styles used within the University College. When considering which format to use for assessing a particular course, module or programme, it is worth bearing in mind the possibility of combining a number of examination formats within one assessment task. For example it is possible to include in an examination sections containing multiple choice questions, along with an essay-style question.

Tutors may also wish to vary the scope of the assessment within an examination by including questions which have different weightings i.e. three questions worth 15% requiring fairly brief responses, and one longer question worth 55%. If this is used then staff must ensure the weighting system is not overly complex, and is made explicit in the information provided for both students and examiners. Varying the format in these ways can help increase the flexibility of examinations as assessment tools, and allow far broader areas to be measured.

2 Coursework³⁴

As a vehicle for assessment coursework is invaluable for ensuring students learn continuously and effectively, and that staff are provided with comprehensive evidence of students' progress. Throughout the University College a variety of coursework assessment tools are employed which measure students' achievement of specific learning outcomes and key skills.

Although coursework may involve some terminal forms of assessment, it is more commonly used throughout the course of students' studies. This function of coursework allows summative assignments to be spread out, thus reducing the possibility of staff and students experiencing excessive end-of-year workloads.

As coursework is an integral part of both formative and summative assessment processes, staff intending to use any of these tools must ensure that:

³⁴ See Appendix for Assessment Tool Grid, which lists the main tools and a selection of variations used within the University College.

- The coursework tool suitably and effectively assesses the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, thus ensuring the process remains valid, reliable, and appropriately supports students' learning experience.
- The assessment and its criteria will measure students at the appropriate level of performance, and will allow for consistent discrimination between students' levels of performance.
- The assessment criteria for each tool should allow enough flexibility to accommodate differences between individual students' style and content, whilst remaining clear and robust.
- The role of the assessment within the course, module or programme is made clear.
- The assessment criteria are clearly laid out in students' course, module or programme handbooks, therefore ensuring they are fully aware of what is expected of them in relation to content and performance.
- The guidelines provided for students before assessment explicitly demonstrates the link between the assessment criteria, the learning outcomes, and the weighting of marks both within the tool, and within the course, module or programme as a whole.
- Details of arrangements for assessment are given, including the date and location for submission, any requirements regarding the format or presentation, the word limit (i.e. number of words, and whether bibliographies and/or quotes will be counted), and referencing requirements.
- Details are given regarding any presentational requirements for the assessment i.e. binding, or format.
- The marking arrangements are clearly explained to all involved i.e. the roles of first, second, and possible additional markers, and external examiners.
- Students are provided, where possible, with formative opportunities to practice using coursework tools prior to their summative assessment.
- Reasonable adjustments have been created to enable students with disabilities to participate equally in the assessment process.
- Where appropriate, details of tutorial arrangements are given to students.
- Where possible, tutors should include suggestions regarding the research and writing techniques used for each tool.
- Where possible, tutors should attempt to incorporate an element of self- (or peer) evaluation into assessments to supplement the formative feedback provided by staff, and to encourage students continuously to evaluate their progress.
- Assignment tasks are designed to minimise opportunities for students to plagiarise, and are varied from year to year to avoid the possibility of plagiarism from previous cohorts' work.

Coursework assessment tools most commonly used within the University College are outlined below.

2.1 Essay

Essay assignments generally present students with questions which they must research and respond to in a coherent and structured manner. Their answer should show considered critical thought, and be expressed clearly and eloquently. Students are therefore measured not only on their knowledge, but also on their ability to apply and to articulate this knowledge effectively.

This type of assessment can be used as a timed task, sat under examination conditions. However, it is more commonly used for open-ended assessments, where essay questions are given to students with a set date by which the written assignment is to be submitted.

Essays usually pose a single question, although it is possible to subdivide the task into a number of individually weighted sections if tutors wish to ensure students cover several topics. However, when using the latter style of essay question students must be informed of the relevant mark weightings for each section.

Essay questions can also incorporate reference material (e.g. quotations or articles), which students are required to analyse and then comment on critically. It is important that staff ensure essay questions are not repeatedly re-used, and that the ability of the question to produce successful measurements of learning outcomes is constantly evaluated.

It may be advisable to offer students the opportunity to submit essay plans or outlines formatively, in order to provide them with feedback. Such feedback can also be supplemented by peer discussion.

2.1.1 Advantages of Essays:

- As this is a commonly used form of assessment, both staff and students are familiar with the tool.
- They involve less continuous staff supervision.
- By allowing students a greater length of time to complete the assessment, essays provide students with the opportunity to produce carefully planned and detailed answers.
- They provide students with sufficient scope to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their knowledge.

2.1.2 Constraints:

- The emphasis on written technique may place some students at a disadvantage.
- It can take effort and experience to create effective essay questions.
- Marking essays can be time consuming for tutors.

- The longer word limits and time frame involved in essay writing can lead students to be less succinct in their responses, and therefore affect the validity of the assessment.
- They are more likely to include plagiarised material than some other types of assessment.

2.2 Individual Study (Undergraduate) & Dissertation (Postgraduate)

The individual study and the dissertation are two of the largest single pieces of work students are required to produce during their studies, and represent the culmination of their learning experience on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes respectively. They constitute flexible tools which are adapted for use throughout the majority of disciplines. They can also encompass a variety of formats, for example extended essays, reports, or projects.

2.2.1 Individual Study

At undergraduate level most BA/BSC programmes encourage or require students to produce an individual study at the end of level three, consisting of approximately 8,000 words. Students, in consultation with tutors and/or programme directors, are expected to select an area on which to focus their research from within the subject boundaries of the programme. They must then submit a proposal for their research, including a provisional title, for consideration by tutors³⁵. These proposals should outline any (required) practical and/or professional elements of the proposed study, and the balance must be approved by tutors.

Once the proposals have been agreed students are expected to engage in thorough research on the agreed topic. This research should then be presented as a substantial piece of written work which demonstrates, through a reasoned and constructive response, the depth and breadth of their knowledge and understanding.

Students' individual studies are assessed in terms of ability to engage in constructive (and largely independent) research, and also on use of written skills and capacity to articulate and support sound arguments. Through this type of assessment students' are also expected to demonstrate their organisational abilities i.e. effective use of time and resources in order to complete the task on time, and thorough documentation of research and findings/data³⁶.

Individual studies demonstrate not only students' ability to collate research and findings on a particular topic, but also to apply their knowledge in analysing this information and incorporating it into a written response. This

³⁵ The Programme Director has discretion to insist on the rewording or reworking of student's individual study proposals and/or titles where necessary.

³⁶ Demonstrated through their references, bibliography, and (where appropriate) literary review.

aspect of the assessment provides tutors with evidence of both the process of students' research, as well as the final product.

During the production of individual studies, students should receive regular tutorial guidance from staff, who must have sufficient specialist knowledge of the particular subject area. The roles and responsibilities of students and staff in relation to these sessions should be set out explicitly in the information provided to both parties, and to external examiners. This information should include, where appropriate, the number of tutorial hours students should expect to receive.

The primary functions of these tutorials sessions are:

- to offer formative feedback opportunities to students throughout the period of study; and
- to enable tutors to oversee draft copies of students' work, monitor their progress, and ensure they understand and are fulfilling their responsibilities.

For these sessions students will be expected to provide evidence of their progress through plans, drafts, working papers, and/or notes. Students may also be required to produce written or verbal presentations on their research area in front of tutors and, where appropriate, peers. Students must be informed of any such requirements in advance of the assessment.

In some cases, students may also be expected to engage in group-based research discussions. These sessions enable students to acquire additional feedback on their work, and to develop and clarify their arguments. These sessions can either be informal formative opportunities for discussion and feedback, or alternatively (where appropriate) a formal summatively assessed aspect of the course, module or programme, constituting a proportion of students' overall mark (e.g. 10%).

2.2.2 Dissertation

This type of assessment encompasses largely the same purposes as the former, and measures similar learning outcomes and assessment criteria. However, this tool is designed primarily to measure students at postgraduate level and involves writing over more extended periods of time. Dissertations are also physically larger, usually consisting of around 12-18,000 words.

Unlike individual studies, the subjects on which students choose to focus their dissertations are not dependent on course, module or programme content. Students are responsible for selecting a topic which interests them. In this method of assessment students have much more freedom in selecting topics for research.

Students must submit a formal proposal for their research to their supervisor, including a provisional title and illustrative bibliography. The submission date should be made clear in advance, in conjunction with

information detailing any summative aspects of the task, and applicable mark weightings.

Students will be expected to submit their finished dissertation, in the appropriate format, for summative assessment within the allotted time. The marking procedures set out for dissertations in programmes' validation documents should be clearly outlined to students and staff in advance of the assessment, i.e. whether the student's supervisor will act as the first marker or not, or whether the work will be first, second and externally marker.

Dissertations require a greater degree of autonomous research and writing than individual studies, which therefore necessitates the provision of a more structured and consistent system of supervision and support. Students must meet regularly with their individual dissertation supervisors, ensuring that they receive sufficient opportunities to discuss, and where possible resolve any problems or issues relating to their work.

Students and tutors must agree on a schedule³⁷ for tutorial sessions at the start of the process, including dates of subsequent meetings, and (where possible) requirements from, or responsibilities of both students and tutors in relation to each session³⁸. During these tutorial sessions, it may be helpful to organise work schedules or agendas with students in order to provide a framework from which they can base their research and writing. The formative benefits of these tutorials can be supplemented by the incorporation of peer group sessions, i.e. student presentations of research findings to peers.

2.2.3 Advantages of Individual Studies and Dissertations:

- Both methods of assessment allow students a greater degree freedom in researching chosen subjects than with other tools.
- Through tutorials sessions students have an opportunity to discuss research and ideas with specialists, and can thereby receive valuable feedback which will inform their progress.
- Both tools evaluate to different degrees students' all-round academic ability, i.e. research, expression, and knowledge.
- The extended word limit and time-frame involved in these assessments allow students to produce in-depth written work.
- Both types of assessment (to differing degrees) allow students to focus their research on an area of study of particular interest to them.
- Writing extended pieces of work independently encourages students to develop their organisational skills and acquire sound time management skills.

³⁷ Each party must have a copy of this agreed timetable.

³⁸ Further details concerning tutorial procedures and responsibilities of both students and staff can be found in the CCCUC MA Taught Dissertation documentation, available on the University College website.

- Discussing research with tutors and peers can encourage students to clarify their thoughts and arguments, therefore improving the overall quality and validity of their research.
- Individual studies are good preparation for those students considering postgraduate study.
- These types of assessment tools are good preparation for students who may be required to produce extended reports in their future employment.

2.2.4 Constraints:

- Students may feel overwhelmed by the scope which these types of assessment can encompass, the workload involved, and/or the independent research and writing involved.
- The variety of topics which can be covered in these types of assessment may lead to problems concerning supervision, i.e. finding tutors with sufficient specialist knowledge to support students.
- Some students may have difficulty with the emphasis placed on organisation and presentation skills in this type of assessment.
- The inevitable variations in style and content which occur in these types of assessment may make the creation and application of assessment criteria which consistently and accurately measure students' work difficult.
- Dissertations particularly, require staff to invest significant amounts of time supervising and supporting students.
- The length and complexity of these types of assessment require staff to spend longer marking than with other methods.

2.3 Assessment of Practice

Assessment of practice can be achieved through a number of different methods, depending on Faculty and/or programme requirements. For example the Faculty of Health most commonly uses the Assessment of Practice Tool (APT); alternatively the Faculty of Education uses Professional Development Journals, Records of Development and Synoptic Assessment.

However, regardless of subject the central purpose of assessing practice is to measure students' against a framework of relevant standards or competences in relation to a particular set of skills, within a practical environment. They must therefore be developed in conjunction with relevant professional and/or regulatory body requirements, and QAA (2001)³⁹ level benchmark statements where appropriate. In order to provide students with a comprehensive learning experience which relates practice elements to appropriate theoretical concepts, professional standards and/or competencies must be clearly linked to relevant taught University College courses, modules or programmes through the learning outcomes.

³⁹ QAA, (2001), *The Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. Gloucester: QAA.

This type of assessment allows programme teams to continuously measure students' skills in appropriate practical contexts, ensuring they are fit to practice professionally and have relevant experience in their chosen specialist area. Generally, standards set out by relevant professional bodies determine the quantity of practice hours students must undertake in order to qualify for an award or (professional) qualification.

Students are assessed within placements by practice supervisors⁴⁰, who are experienced professionals. Each student is allocated a practice supervisor at the start of each placement who is responsible for ensuring they receive sufficient opportunities to develop necessary experience. Practice supervisors should provide formative sessions⁴¹ in which students are given feedback on their progress, and any areas of concern can be addressed, and where possible resolved. It is advisable to provide guidelines in validation documents and information provided to students and practice supervisors regarding any requirements relating to the number or scheduling of supervisory sessions which students should receive⁴².

To maintain the quality of assessment programme teams must ensure that update sessions are regularly available for practice supervisors, and that there is a forum for the discussion of problems or issues relating to students and/or assessment procedures. The process of practice assessment must be monitored by University College tutors to ensure sufficient support is provided for both students and practice supervisors. This monitoring process normally includes visits by University College staff to practice supervisors' workplaces.

At the start of each placement period it is advisable that practice supervisors and students discuss, and create an agenda (either formally or informally) for practice experience that outlines:

- the skills students will be required to demonstrate,
- how these will be achieved during the placement,
- the evidence students will be required to provide in relation to these demonstrations, and
- the schedule for subsequent supervisory sessions (formative and /or summative).

In some programmes these agendas may form part of the formal summative assessment process i.e. as in the Faculty of Health IPL programme, where students create Learning Contracts which record in writing their formative and summative sessions with practice supervisors.

The method by which students are assessed during practice placements can vary greatly, and is largely dependent on the requirements of the particular

40 These supervisors should be listed with the appropriate programme team and/or department, who retain records of all (professional) practice supervisors currently up-to-date with required training.

41 These sessions may be face-to-face, or alternatively online discussions (available more readily through the Blackboard systems which are being put into place in departments).

42 There may be professional or regulatory body requirements regarding supervised sessions e.g. in Health students are required to spend a minimum 40% of placement time with practice supervisors.

discipline in question. Two of the most commonly used methods within the University College are:

- In the Faculty of Health students are assessed within placement environments by practice supervisors known as Practice Learning Facilitators⁴³ (PLFs). These PLFs generally judge students on a series of observed demonstrations of skills, where performance is graded against criteria which incorporate relevant professional competencies. The marks are given in terms of pass, fail and/or where appropriate, level of achievement and the results are then recorded along with appropriate formative feedback in the APT document which is moderated by students' University College Personal Tutors.

The APT requires students to meet with PLFs for a minimum three formative sessions⁴⁴, where they must construct a Learning Contract and discuss their progress. Formative sessions mid-way through placements offer students an opportunity to produce self-evaluations and discuss their progress with PLFs, after which their learning contracts can be modified accordingly. Any areas of concern highlighted during these sessions must be addressed collaboratively by students, PLFs and Personal Tutors.

PLFs assess students summatively through end-of-placement sessions, where the final assessment judgement is formulated in consultation with students. The results and feedback are then recorded in the APT document.

In conjunction with this assessment of practical skills, students are also expected to provide written evidence for professional and academic bodies that a consistent level of ability has been maintained. This is achieved through a Portfolio of Personal and Professional Development (PPPD), in which students provide written evidence demonstrating practical learning e.g. through reflective writing, self-evaluative reports or reviews, and commentary by PLFs. These portfolios represent a proportion⁴⁵ of the total summative mark for the assessment.

- In the Faculty of Education practice supervisors are known as Mentors, and work in conjunction with Link Tutors from the University College. Both supervisors attend a series of observed lessons or part lessons, which are used formatively to develop and improve students' practice over the periods of school experience. The lesson observations are not generally graded, although mentors

43 PLFs are listed with the programme team and/or department, who retain a record of all (professional) supervisors currently up-to-date with required training. To maintain the quality of assessment standards, programme teams must ensure that update sessions are regularly available for PLFs, and that there is a forum for discussion of any problems or issues relevant to their work with students. This monitoring process should also include visits by College Staff to PLFs in the work place.

44 At the start, middle and end of each placement.

45 In the IPL programme the PPPD represents 25% of the overall grade for the students' assessed practice element.

are required to indicate any areas of students' practice that give them cause for concern.

At the end of the school experience mentors complete end-of-placement summative reports, and an examination board comprising of school mentors and University College link tutors make the final decisions on whether students pass or fail.

Both the lesson observations and summative reports should be used by students as opportunities to monitor and review their own progress. Students should develop their own targets and action plans, which alongside the mentors' written reports will contribute to their Records of Development or Professional Development Journals. These two written tools are the evidence through which students can demonstrate their experience and achievement of necessary practical skills.

Regardless of the manner in which students are assessed within placements it is vital for the sake of validity and reliability that a coherent and consistent understanding of assessment criteria and grade weightings exist between students, practice supervisors and University College tutors.

2.3.1 Advantages of the assessment of practice:

- It is a versatile tool, suitable for a wide variety of practical and professional programmes.
- It provides students with experience of working in practical environments, helping to ensure they are sufficiently prepared for future employment.
- Supervisory sessions provide students with the opportunity to work collaboratively with, and learn from experienced professionals.
- The evidence provided by the assessment of practice offers employers relevant experiential information regarding students' skills and knowledge.
- Incorporating self-evaluative elements into the assessment of practice provides students with an opportunity to extend their understanding of their place within the practice environment, and to comment on the processes of practice assessment.

2.3.2 Constraints:

- There must be sufficient training to ensure practice supervisors are confident in interpreting and applying assessment criteria to students' placement experience.
- Differences in the level of experience, demands placed on practice supervisors from employers and/or their workload, can adversely affect the process of assessment.
- There is a possibility that personal differences may occur between students, practice supervisors, and/or University College tutors, which may adversely affect students' progress. (These eventualities must be catered for within a programme's assessment strategy).

2.4 Case Studies

Case studies are a form of assessment which can be adapted to suit most disciplines, however they are most commonly used to measure students in relation to practical subjects e.g. Health or Education. This assessment tool requires students to produce a piece of written work based either on a hypothetical⁴⁶ scenario, or alternatively on a real situation they have encountered during their learning experience, i.e. in clinical or educational environments.

In this method of assessment students are presented with problem-solving tasks through which they must demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to (simulated) practical situations. They are expected to evaluate the situations under consideration and utilise their knowledge in identifying areas of concern and, where possible, suggest solutions. The major advantage of case study assessment is its ability to encourage students to place their knowledge and learning in relevant practical contexts. This allows tutors to gauge the extent of their understanding and competency in relation to the subject area being assessed.

The format which students' responses take can vary according to the purpose and criteria of each task, for example they may be required to produce a Diagnostic assignment, a Critical Incident reflection or review, or to use the case study as the basis of a project⁴⁷.

Link to the LTEU website:

<http://lteu.cant.ac.uk/assessment-handbook/>

2.4.1 Advantages of Case Studies:

- This type of assessment is an appropriate and effective method of measuring professional and practical standard and/or competence in a written format.
- Students gain confidence in their ability to use their knowledge in making critical, practical and/or professional judgement.
- It places students theoretical and academic knowledge in a relevant practical context.
- Hypothetical case studies have a value, even if a limited one, in permitting students to apply theoretical knowledge to aspects of practice which they might not be able to experience in a particular placement.

⁴⁶ This may be created especially for the assessment task by the tutors, or may be taken from a literary source.

⁴⁷ This is often the case with students writing Individual Studies (Final Year) or compiling portfolios.

2.4.2 Constraints:

- In using any 'case' taken from students' practical experience, the issue of confidentiality concerning the participants' personal details must be carefully considered.
- If students are required to select case studies from practical experience, then there must be sufficient opportunity for them to gather suitable examples.
- Students may need guidance on choosing cases which offer enough scope or difficulty to satisfy the appropriate criteria and level of assessment.

2.5 Oral Presentations

This type of assessment requires students' to produce an oral presentation on a specific topic or question, in front of an audience of peers and an internal examiner(s). Oral assessment is a flexible tool, which may involve presenting a research paper, a report, a review, or perhaps provide a relevant practical or clinical demonstration.

The main function of an oral presentation is, to assess not only students' knowledge of a subject area, but also their ability to communicate their thoughts, and relevant information in a clear, coherent, and confident manner. This function provides tutors with evidence of students' level of understanding regarding the subject matter involved, especially if students' are expected to participate in a discussion or question session after the formal presentation.

These presentations can be either individual or group⁴⁸, depending on the purpose of, and criteria for the task, and the number of students being assessed. Arrangements for both types of assessment must be made clear to students beforehand, including details of the division of marks, and the time allocated for each student (either individually, or within a group).

Students may choose or be required to support presentations (where appropriate), with technical or visual aids such as handouts, overhead projections, slides, PowerPoint, video and/or audio clips (depending on availability). The use of visual aids and handouts allow students to incorporate a degree of innovation and creativity into their work which may not necessarily be available with more traditional written tools. Students must therefore receive information and guidance beforehand on the availability and use of such aids.

Students may be required to submit any such visual aids used for summative assessment, together with notes relating to the presentation, a bibliography, and/or a written commentary. Alternatively, tutors may wish to incorporate a formal written requirement into the task, requiring

⁴⁸ Group oral assessments have many of the same characteristics and difficulties as ordinary group projects (see previous section on Group Work in this document).

students to submit a supplementary report or self-evaluative review⁴⁹ in conjunction with their presentation. In both cases, students must be made aware through the assessment information of criteria relating to the written work.

Presentations generally last between 5-40 minutes, dependant on the purpose, criteria, number of students participating, and the academic level being assessed. The internal examiner(s) present should assess students against the criteria outlined in the assessment sheet. If a second internal examiner is not present, presentations should be videoed in order to ensure that the work can be moderated subsequently by a second marker, and that appropriate assessment evidence is available for external examiners⁵⁰.

Any written work must be formally submitted after the oral presentations, and assessed by internal examiners. The marks for both the verbal and written elements of the assessment are then combined to achieve students' final assessment grades, which are recorded on the assessment sheets. It is therefore essential that students are given explicit information regarding the relative weighting of each aspect of the assessment.

2.5.1 Advantages of Oral Presentations:

- The feedback students receive from peers listening to their presentations is generally immediate and therefore extremely valid in offering guidance on improvements and strengths.
- This type of assessment offers students experience of the skills required for public speaking, which will undoubtedly be valuable in the work environment.
- The limited time given to each student to present their work requires students to present their thoughts in a clear and accurate manner.
- Tutors have the opportunity, through question and discussion sessions associated with the presentation, to gather evidence the students have understood the subject, and have used their own thoughts and research.
- Group oral presentations require students to work collectively to achieve the best result, and therefore provide valuable team building experience.
- Oral presentations are primarily marked during the session and as such reduce the quantity of written work tutors must mark after the assessment.

2.5.2 Constraints:

- Some students may find the element of public speaking involved in this type of assessment extremely stressful, adversely affecting the work of otherwise skilled student.

⁴⁹ This addition is more commonly associated with group presentations, where students are required to produce a review of their peers' contributions to the presentation.

⁵⁰ If presentations are not videoed, then the second marker must attend a minimum 20% of presentations, and then discuss marking criteria with the first marker.

- Tutors must be aware of the time restrictions associated with this type of assessment, and plan sessions accordingly in order to sufficiently examine all necessary learning outcomes.
- The selection of suitable space is essential in light of the length of time required for this type of assessment, and the need for specific audio/visual equipment.
- Students who may be ill or otherwise unable to present at the specified time, may have to be assessed at a different time, with few or no peers present.
- Feedback given to earlier presenters (verbal or written) can assist the performance of students later in the presentation schedule, and some allowance for this may have to be made in terms of marking; this moves the assessment slightly away from being clearly criteria-based.

2.6 Group Work

This type of assessment requires groups of students to work collaboratively in order to complete a task, such as an oral presentation, report, poster or practical project. Group assessment may have more than one purpose: that is, to judge both the process and/or product of the work, therefore it must be made clear which element is being assessed in each task.

If the *process* is to be assessed as well as the group product there must be a clear strategy for collecting written and/or verbal evidence to support any judgements staff must make. For example these assessments may involve students being required to include minutes of group meetings, individual reflections, peer and/or self-assessment of group contributions, personal logs, or to participate in interviews and/or viva voce sessions. These types of tool are useful for collecting evidence of individual students' participation and performance within the group environment, and can aid tutors in assessing the group as a whole.

The real problems in devising equitable and rigorous methods of allocating marks to individual group members has meant that some tutors have queried whether group work should be used in the final year of study. For the sake of equity and validity there must also be clear guidelines in place to resolve any potential difficulties occurring within the groups for example i.e. if one member becomes ill; if there is a serious disagreement within the group; if one student is not fulfilling their obligations within the group. It is also essential that tutorial supervision is provided to review the progress of each group, and offer staff an opportunity to check on any problems with the workings of the group.

When assessing group work, there are a number of ways in which marks may be allocated, therefore it is essential students understand in advance how they are to be allocated within the group. For example:

- A single piece of work may be submitted, and each member of the group is given an identical mark.

- A single piece of work may be submitted, with each individual in the group receiving a different mark.
- The group work together, but each produce a piece of work which is individually assessed.
- The group work together to produce a joint submission for which they receive identical marks, however they also produce individual pieces of work which are separately assessed.

2.6.1 Advantages of Group Work:

- This type of assessment may help reduce the workload for staff with a large number of students i.e. by allocating group marks the quantity of marking can be decreased.
- Group assessments often allow tutors to set substantial tasks that would be unreasonable if set for an individual assignment.
- **Group work allows students to acquire valuable interpersonal experience, applicable to future work environments.**
- By encouraging students to work as a team and delegate responsibility, this type of assessment integrates formative opportunities which are not viable in other methods of assessment.
- Group work can encourage students to co-operate and engage with each other, thus enriching their overall learning experience. It can be especially valuable for those students in the first year of study, as it encourages social interaction.
- When group work is successful the outcome is better than any individual in the group would have been able to manage on their own
- Students who perform less well in written assignments may flourish in a group work environment.

2.6.2 Constraints:

- There is always the danger that some students may not willingly participate, or make sufficient effort towards completing a task, thus putting the other members of the group at a constraint.
- Some students may be incapable, for one or more reasons, of participating in this form of assessment and appropriate allowances will have to be made.
- This type of assessment requires detailed and explicit organisational instructions and monitoring by staff to ensure the validity, equity and reliability of the assessment.
- Group work requires students to organise themselves, and find sufficient time to research the assessment subject and collaborate to complete the assignment. Some students may have less free time than others i.e. those who are part-time, have families or jobs. In recent years this has become a significant issue.
- Students who perform exceptionally, or those who struggle with a subject or skill, may feel constrained (in different ways) by the process of group work.

- Assessment of group work has to be carefully thought through and articulated to the programme team and to the students.

2.7 Peer & Self-assessment

Peer and self-assessment are two inter-related tools which play an important evaluative role in learning and teaching processes. The feedback and learning experience students acquire through peer and self-assessment make these methods of assessment formatively valuable, helping them to acquire a wider and more thorough understanding of their achievements. The main characteristics of these methods of assessment are:

- **Peer Assessment** - this obliges students to mark and provide feedback on either a single piece of their peers' work, or the work of a whole group using a framework of learning outcomes and assessment criteria specific to the course, module or programme. The logistics of marking work from large groups (for both students and staff) can be somewhat problematic and may therefore require staff to divide students into more manageable sized groups beforehand. However, when work is marked by more than one student it can provide staff with evidence of consistent marking decisions and offer students a greater quantity of feedback. Feedback from peer assessments can be presented either formally and/or informally, and it is important (student) assessors are informed beforehand whether this will be presented anonymously or in front of the group.
- **Self-Assessment** - this encourages students to reflect on and review their own work and/or experience with regard to its success in meeting the relevant assessment criteria and learning outcomes. In assessing their work students should be provided with the same marking criteria available to internal and external examiners in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the process. The criteria given to students must be transparently linked to appropriate learning outcomes to ensure they are confident in approaching this type of task. It is also important that tutors carefully moderate the process of self-assessment to ensure students feel adequately supported. However, the correct balance must be found to ensure students have sufficient autonomy and to prevent them from feeling over-supervised.

Peer and self-assessment are most commonly used for formative purposes, although they can have summative applications' when incorporated into other assessment tools⁵¹ i.e. incorporating self evaluative commentary into reports or case studies, or including peer and/or self-assessment elements into group projects.

To ensure the validity of these assessments it is important tutors ensure that the subject areas covered in peer or self-assessment are ones in which students are likely to have adequate knowledge and skill to perform well. Furthermore, there must be sufficient guidance for students on how to

⁵¹ In these cases however the peer or self-assessment element of the summative assessment will be graded as a percentage of the overall mark for the task e.g. 25%.

mark using the assessment criteria, and how best to offer constructive criticism on their own work or that of their peers. Staff should ensure students are given sufficient autonomy when assessing their own or others' work. However, tutors must retain overall control of the assessment, reviewing students' performances and offering feedback (either formal or informal) on their progress.

2.7.1 Advantages of Peer and Self-assessment:

- Peer and self-assessment can aid students in acquiring a sense of ownership towards their work and the assessment process itself, thus motivating them and deepening their learning experience.
- Both types of assessment help develop students' critical, analytic and evaluative skills.
- When used formatively, peer and self-assessment helps prepare students for summative assessment without adding to tutors marking workloads.
- Having used the assessment criteria and learning outcomes to judge their own work or others', students may find they can more clearly understand how and why marks have been allocated by tutors, and feedback may be taken more seriously by students.
- Peer assessment which requires (student) assessors to give feedback verbally can help develop interpersonal skills, and aid students in gaining experience in offering constructive criticism which will be valuable in future employment.
- Through peer assessment students receive a greater quantity of feedback.
- Anonymous peer marking and feedback may allow students to offer more honest and critical commentary of their peers' work.
- Students may feel more motivated to produce serious responses to formative assessment tasks when being assessed by peers.

2.7.2 Constraints:

- Both peer and self-assessment tasks take time to set up and run effectively.
- Staff may need development sessions before using these types of assessment.
- It may be difficult to achieve a balance between sufficiently moderating these processes and allowing students sufficient autonomy in marking work.
- If tutors become over-involved in these types of assessment students may feel they have little real control over marking and therefore not take the tasks as seriously.
- Peer and self-assessment may lead to students being overly generous when marking work, which may not necessarily fully reflect the works success in achieving criteria and learning outcomes.
- Students will require explicit guidelines and sufficient tutorial support in order to ensure the validity and reliability of these assessments.
- Peer assessment in particular, can require a significant amount of time and effort to set up and moderate effectively.

- It is possible some students may feel uncomfortable with judging, or being judged by their peers. This may affect the quality and consistency of results and consequently students' learning experience.
- Self assessment removes the possibility of anonymous marking, which may undermine the equity of the assessment process.
- In self- assessment students may judge their work in terms of what they meant, rather than evaluating what they actually produced.

2.8 Poster

This type of assessment requires students to select a research area from the topics covered during a course, module or programme, and to produce a poster or display which focuses on a particular aspect or question relating to it. The object of this method is to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a creative manner through research and presentation. Through this process tutors can acquire evidence of the depth of students' understanding of the subject, and therefore their progress within the course, module or programme.

Students are not generally obliged to supplement their posters with oral presentations, they must therefore ensure the posters' content is clearly understandable, without additional explanation. Visual impact is an important aspect of this process, requiring student to achieve a balance between written and creative elements of the piece. It is important that students understand the academic requirements for this type of tool to ensure they include sufficient evidence of research, theory, and critical thought.

This assessment tool can either be used as an individual, or group project, depending on the number of students being assessed, and the purpose of the task. When the task involves group participation, tutors must ensure there are explicit details concerning the division of marks associated in relation to the content, and production, and effort i.e. whether individual contributions are to be assessed (and if so how), or an overall group mark is to be awarded.

The assessment information should also contain details concerning the expected size, word equivalence, and expected content of the poster presentation.

Tutors may also wish to incorporate an element of peer review into the task to increase the formative value of the assessment. This would most commonly involve students' work being put on display⁵², and each student being provided with a comment sheet on which to record marks and comments for each poster, using the assessment criteria for the task. The comments generated through these sheets provide immediate formative

⁵² It is advisable that the students' work remains anonymous during this peer assessment, to ensure the validity and reliability of the process.

As such, students should only write their personal details on the reverse of the poster before being displayed.

feedback for the students, which is a valuable supplement to the marks and guidance provided by the internal examiners.

2.8.1 Advantages of Posters:

- This type of assessment allows students a greater degree of creativity and innovation both in the presentation of their work, and the way they approach the subject matter.
- The restrictions imposed through size and word limit require students to ensure their work is concise and accurate. They are forced to consider what to include, and to focus their research on essential areas.
- Through the material students choose to include in posters, and the clarity of expression, tutors can acquire evidence of their level of understanding concerning the subject matter being discussed.
- The creative freedom of this type of work can motivate students, giving them a sense of having achieved something which demonstrates their individuality and skill.
- Posters encourage students to improve their independent learning skills by offering more freedom in relation to format and presentation.

2.8.2 Constraints:

- Students may be unfamiliar with this type of assessment, and therefore feel daunted by the amount of autonomy involved in its construction.
- Students require explicit instructions concerning the content and format requirements.
- An emphasis on creativity may lead students to focus less on the academic elements of the assessment, thus making the assessment less valid in measuring the learning outcomes.
- There may be difficulties in transporting and storing posters, as they are more bulky than normal written work.
- There may need to be adjustments made to submission arrangements to accommodate the size of this type of work.
- Posters may initially take longer to mark, owing to the need to apply criteria to a wide variety in style, presentation and content.
- It may be difficult to construct clear and accurate criteria which accurately assess the creative aspects of this type of task.

2.9 Portfolio

This type of assessment provides structured evidence of students' progression in relation to learning outcomes, key skills and, where applicable, professional requirements. Students must draw together coherently, a variety of work produced throughout their studies, demonstrating their development of specific skills and knowledge applicable to the subject.

The evidence included within portfolios is dictated by the subject and/or discipline, often in accordance with the requirements of relevant professional bodies. It is important tutors make clear to students in advance, the quantity and content of work to be included, i.e. whether they must present all work produced throughout the course of study (the entire range of results), or whether they can assemble the best examples for assessment.

Critical reflections are an integral element of the evidence provided through portfolios, offering students the opportunity to evaluate their performance in relation to specific learning outcomes. Portfolios can also involve a degree of formative assessment, as students are often encouraged to submit sections of work for review by tutors, and on occasions by peers. This provides students with valuable feedback on their progress, and can confirm for tutors that the appropriate evidence is being included.

Portfolios therefore require students to be provided with explicit guidance beforehand, including details of:

- the role of portfolios within a course, module or programme, including information on which learning outcomes will be assessed, and how they are to be incorporated into the assignment, thus ensuring the work produced is valid;
- the format in which the portfolio is to be submitted i.e. hardcopy, electronic/on-line, or multimedia (including audio and video elements). This should include details on the style of presentation, the physical size of the portfolio, and the word limit (or equivalent);
- the structuring and organisation of the portfolio. Students' work must be readable and accessible to assessors, therefore it is advisable that structural requirements are kept simple and clear, to prevent misunderstanding and consequent constraint to some students. The provision of a basic template, or, alternatively, past (anonymous) examples of assessed portfolios, may offer a valuable source of guidance for those students unfamiliar with this form of assessment;
- tutors' estimates of the time required to produce a portfolio.

2.9.1 Advantages of Portfolios:

- Portfolios require students to analyse their work, providing them with the opportunity to evaluate their success in achieving learning outcomes, and thus encouraging them to gain a more thorough understanding of the subject.
- Portfolios provide future employers with useful evidence of students' experience, skills and competency in specific areas.
- Students may feel a greater sense of ownership with this type of assessment, as they have invested time collecting and organising their work into a coherent form.
- Portfolios provide students with the opportunity to structure and present their work creatively. As such, they offer students a chance to express the full range of their abilities and achievements.

2.9.2 Constraints:

- Portfolios take a significant amount of time to compile, and students require a great deal of supervision to ensure portfolios are valid and accessible.
- This type of assessment tool takes a considerable amount of time to mark.
- It is inevitably harder to produce clear and reliable assessment criteria for portfolios, which allow students a degree of freedom in presentation. Tutors must therefore create criteria which will effectively and objectively measure the achievement of learning outcomes and professional requirements, regardless of individual expression.
- Portfolios can create problems concerning the authenticity of students' work. It can be difficult to judge the degree of collaboration that may have taken place during the creation of the portfolio.
- This type of assessment often places emphasis on students' organisational ability, which should not detract from their achievement of skills, and understanding of the subject.

2.10 Project

Project work is a relatively generic term for a more extended form of summative assessment designed to test students' knowledge and skills in a comprehensive manner. The purpose of this type of tool is to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to combine practical, evaluative and analytical elements in their writing, which reveals the depth and breadth of their learning experience in a particular area of study.

Projects generally consist of a substantial piece of research, in which students are required to collate, analyse, and evaluate relevant theoretical and practical information through their course of study or practical placement. This work must then be shaped into a structured conclusion, i.e. a report, or review which details their methods and results.

In this type of assessment students may be required to research specific areas set by teaching staff, however more commonly students choose for themselves which area of study to focus on (in consultation with tutors). This aspect of project work is illustrative of the greater degree of independence students are required to demonstrate through their work, encouraging them to focus their research, and promoting deeper learning.

However, the independent work students undertake must be supported with tutorial supervision in order to ensure they are sufficiently motivated and confident in approaching their research. It is also advisable to include opportunities for students to engage in peer and self review, through

seminar discussions relating to project work. Providing students with formative sessions regarding their work for the assessment should help maintain their motivation and provide valuable constructive criticism.

2.10.1 Advantages of Projects:

- This type of assessment provides evidence not only of students' ability to express their knowledge clearly, but also of their skills in researching and processing information.
- Project work can incorporate a wide variety of different academic and practical elements, i.e. case studies, practical or laboratory research, presentations, and/or group work (peer review), which serve to enrich students overall learning experience.
- Incorporating elements of self-evaluation into the criteria, and providing peer review sessions in relation to the assessment can generate valuable formative feedback.
- Students may feel more motivated when working on a subject which they have chosen for themselves.

2.10.2 Constraints:

- Students may feel daunted by the level of independent thought required with this type of assessment work.
- Projects may take a significant amount of time to mark, depending on the quantity of work included.

2.11 Report

This is an extremely flexible type of assessment tool, which can be modified to suit most subjects, although it is primarily used in practical disciplines. It requires students to research and review either a practical area or scenario, and subsequently produce an evaluative response.

The purpose of a report is to provide a written document outlining students' practical findings or experiences, thus giving tutors evidence with which to measure their success in demonstrating both theoretical and practical knowledge and skill. It also provides evidence of the processes involved in students' learning, as well as the product.

Reports can be produced in response to a single question or task, which requires students' to produce a more focused and lengthy response. Alternatively, students may be required to answer a series of more specific or direct questions which entail shorter responses. Reports often incorporate strong elements of self-evaluation, where students' are required to include sections reviewing their progress and success in achieving the learning outcomes. This type of assessment is formative, allowing students to reflect on how their work can be improved.

2.11.1 Advantages of Reports:

- In writing up reports, students gain a deeper understanding of the methods and/or processes which were involved.
- The self-evaluative nature of this type of assessment is extremely valuable in providing students with information by which to improve their performance.
- Tutors can accurately assess students' competence in practical areas, without the necessity of being present in the room.
- Report writing is an essential skill in many practical areas of employment, and as such the experience students gain through this type of assessment is vital to future employability.

2.11.2 Constraints:

- The report may only cover specific areas of students' experience, which may not always present a full picture of their performance, i.e. students may leave out references to mistakes, or failed experiments when writing their report.
- Students must have clear guidelines on what is to be included in their report and the extent to which they are expected to evaluate their progress.

2.12 Review

This type of assessment tool requires students to produce a written analysis drawing on their knowledge and understanding of a subject. Reviews can take a variety of formats, depending on the discipline to which they apply and the purpose of the task. However, the basic function of a review is to elicit an analytical and evaluative response from students on a particular subject or situation, allowing them to demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge. There are two main types of review which can be adapted to suit departmental requirements:

- **Literary Reviews** - This type of assessment tool requires students to examine a piece of written evidence (i.e. a journal article) in light of relevant theoretical and practical knowledge, and then produce a critical assessment of the arguments/issues present.
- **Reflective Reviews** - This type of task requires students to produce a self-evaluative written piece which analyses their progress either during the course of a project or academic task, or within a practical or clinical situation. They must objectively examine their success in achieving relevant learning outcomes or skills in light of their knowledge of the subject.

Both types of review are valuable in encouraging students to apply theoretical knowledge, and in demonstrating their ability to analyse critically information and to produce evaluative responses.

Students must receive clear guidelines concerning the type of information which is appropriate for review, including details (where appropriate) of the areas to be covered, the format, word limit, assessment criteria, and submission date for the task.

2.12.1 Advantages of Reviews:

- Students learn to apply their own knowledge.
- They develop their analytical and evaluative skills.
- They encourage deeper engagement with research material and relevant subject matter.

2.12.2 Constraints:

- There must be sufficient resources available for students to undertake the task effectively.
- Tutors must ensure that any source material given out for review purposes is accurate and complete.

2.13 Computer-Aided Assessment (CAA)

Computer-Aided Assessment or Computer-Assisted Assessment (CAA) offers a variety of formative and summative assessment opportunities, which can be electronically delivered, submitted, marked and evaluated. CAA most commonly provides objective testing i.e. through multiple choice questions⁵³ (with a series of pre-defined answers), select and insert tasks, text match exercises, and/or true/false questions. These types of questions are often stored in 'banks', enabling staff to input a series of criteria, and receive a randomly selected set of questions for assessing those particular criteria. These banks however, require the regular input of new questions to maintain the quality of assessment CAAs produce.

When using CAA summatively, tutors must ensure tasks are timed⁵⁴, invigilated, and that the seating arrangements and location ensure candidates are not able to see each others screens. The computers used can be internet and/or intranet linked, allowing assessments to make use of a variety of online reference material. This feature of CAA can be supported through the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), which offer opportunities to incorporate peer and/or self-evaluation into assessment processes. This can be done for example, through the creation of electronic self-assessment tests for students, and/or participation in online discussion groups.

⁵³ This is currently the most commonly used form of CAA, and produces responses which are either correct or incorrect, and can therefore be graded by automatic marking software.

⁵⁴ The time limitation applied can vary according to each assessment i.e. it may last an hour, several, or possibly for a day

When using any form of CAA, it is essential to ensure the computer systems used are secure, and that communication tools such as e-mail and 'chat' software (i.e. Windows Messenger), are disabled. Substantial planning is required to maintain the reliable and equitable delivery of this type of assessment. Sufficient fail-safes must be in place to prevent students being constrained by any technical failures⁵⁵.

There must also be robust and consistent support systems in place for staff wishing to implement CAA in their course, module or programme, to compensate for the technical knowledge required. Creating effective CAA involves both technical and academic skills, and therefore requires a significant amount of co-operation between academic and support staff.

2.13.1 Advantages of CAA:

- CAA can be used to create questions not usually viable with more traditional forms of assessment i.e. incorporating audio or video clips, or interactive elements.
- This type of assessment has strong diagnostic and formative functions, providing staff with valuable evidence of students' progress and weaknesses.
- Students receive more rapid feedback on their performance and progress.
- By using automatic marking systems for multiple choice style tests, CAA can reduce tutors' post-assessment workload dramatically i.e. removing the necessity for second marking.
- Computerised grading may increase the level of consistency in the marking process.
- Question Banks have the potential to encourage inter-departmental sharing of information, techniques and materials, and thus encourage the creation of innovative and varied assessment.
- Computer Aided Assessment (CAA) can benefit some disabled students as well as providing a rigorous examination process. Students with disabilities can make use of new technologies and benefit from inclusive design to go through the same educational processes and experiences as other students without being made a special case of.

2.13.2 Constraints:

- The creation of effective CAA assessment requires substantial preparation, time and skill.
- Staff unfamiliar with CAA will require appropriate training, which must be regularly updated in step with developments in technology.
- Some students may be unfamiliar with computer systems and therefore require training prior to the assessment, to prevent them being constrained.

- It may be difficult to create assessments which effectively measure students at the appropriate level of difficulty.
- The tendency to use multiple choice style questions in CAA, may present too superficial a judgement of students' skills.
- CAA can cause difficulties in terms of the availability of computers for students, supervision of assessments taking place at different times or locations, and the necessity to distribute effectively students within that location.
- Computer systems linked to the internet require rigorous security procedures to ensure the safety and reliability of assessments.
- CAA requires specific software, the purchase of which can entail expense, and extensive setup and integration periods.

2.14 Practical Work

Practical work can be assessed either through timed exercises (usually one and a half hours), which are taken under the same examination conditions as more formal examinations, or through more open ended practical assignments. The practical skills assessed can include a wide variety of disciplines and topics such as scientific laboratory work, computer programming, or practical clinical scenarios. Despite the departmental variations, there is a general underlying purpose to practical assessments, which is to provide evidence of students' practical skills, and their ability to apply these skills to specific situations. Students are therefore placed in simulated practical situations, which required them to respond to a scenario(s) i.e. solve problems using their knowledge and skills, or extract results from a quantity of data.

It is important when designing practical assessments that the criteria measure not only the final product of the question/task, but also provide evidence of the process of achieving that product. This may involve requiring students to include working notes from their practical work, or a form of self review which students write as part of the assessment task

Practical assessments can be flexible in measuring both a breadth and depth of knowledge and skill which students have acquired. Tutors can use this format to test students with a number of short and relatively simple tasks which can provide evidence of their abilities concerning breadth of topics or skills. Alternatively, by setting students a single task/scenario and providing a greater length of time to complete the assessment, tutors can achieve a measurement of students' ability to work on complex problems and thoroughly test their knowledge and understanding of a particular topic/area/skill.

2.14.1 Advantages of Practical Work:

- In assessing students' practical skills, this type of assessment provides both tutors and future employers with evidence of students' abilities to perform within a work environment and to apply their academic knowledge to practical situations.

- By assessing practical skills students may gain confidence in their ability to perform these skills in later employment situations.
- By assessing both the process and product of practical work, this type of assessment fulfils a valuable formative function, by allowing students to gain experience of applying the theory they have been taught.

2.14.2 Constraints:

- Assessing more complex tasks/problems takes up a considerable amount of time.
- The high demand for appropriate and sufficient facilities for operating these types of assessments needs to be taken into account in the planning of them.
- It may be difficult to assess the process of practical work, as well as the product.

2.15 Laboratory Work

There are a variety of ways in which practical laboratory work can be assessed, although it is most commonly through the submission of written evidence of students' experience and performance. The tools used are largely dependent on departmental requirements, and the level being assessed. Below is a brief description of the tools which are most commonly used in the assessment of laboratory work for two distinct phases of students' learning experience:

2.15.1 Assessment in Foundation and Year 1

The purpose of the tools used to assess students in these programmes is usually to generate diagnostic and formative evidence of students' basic ability and knowledge of particular skills. These tools are therefore based around tutors observing students within a practical environment, in order to acquire evidence of their level of competency and progress.

There are two assessment processes at this level:

- Practical Exercises - where students are required to perform a variety of practical tasks supervised by a tutor. The students' results are then recorded on observation sheets⁵⁶, and signed off by the supervising tutor as evidence of their demonstration of skills.
- Practical Reports – where students are required to write up reports on their practical laboratory work, including an outline of their processes, findings, and evaluating their own progress.

⁵⁶ These are contained within the students' Programme Handbook.

Both these tools are submitted for summative assessment by internal examiners, and form part of the students' overall PDP documentation. The marks from both the practical and written elements of the tasks are then moderated, and combined into the overall mark for the course, module or programme.

2.15.1.1 Advantages:

- Observation sheets allow tutors to assess students' competency in key practical skills, serving a valuable diagnostic and formative function.
- They also allow tutors to provide immediate formative feedback to students.
- Written practical reports offer students an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to write up their processes, and findings in an organised and accurate manner.
- Written reports provide students with the opportunity to incorporate elements of self-evaluation into their response, providing them with valuable information to improve their future performance.

2.15.1.2 Constraints:

- Assessing students during practical sessions has to be judiciously done; it may otherwise lead to students feeling over-supervised.
- The number or selection of practical skills tutors will assess is not straightforward; a strategy is needed which prevents students from feeling over-assessed.
- This type of assessment can be time consuming for tutors if they are expected to be present during a large number of practical sessions.

2.15.2 Assessment in Year 2 and Above

The assessment tools used at these levels perform a more complicated function. They must include evidence of students' ability and experience of more advanced practical skills. It is also important to encourage students to work more independently and to ensure that theory and practice are thoroughly incorporated into their work.

Subsequently, students are most commonly assessed through a practical logbook in which they are required to record written evidence of the research, experiments, workings, findings, and/or fieldwork they have undertaken during the course, module or programme. This logbook⁵⁷ is then submitted as part of their summative assessment⁵⁸, providing evidence of practical experience in conjunction with any other required written work.

There are two main formats which these logbooks can take, depending on the purpose and criteria involved in the task:

⁵⁷ Any specifications regarding size or format of notebooks used should be detailed in the student handbook for the programme.

⁵⁸ Their Individual Study, and/or PDP.

- Notebook Format – This is used primarily in terms of observational assessment. Students must provide evidence of their workings throughout the course, module or programme, through the notes and results presented in this notebook.
- Portfolio Format – This type of logbook requires students to write up a number of separate reports on their practical work, and include them in a portfolio of evidence which is submitted terminally for assessment. The primary function of this type of assessment is to demonstrate students' interpretive abilities.

The logbook is a valuable assessment tool in terms of measuring students' practical skills, as it provides tutors with evidence of the *process* of practical work, as well as the results (and reports). Through their logbooks, students' demonstrate their ability to research effectively, to record accurately, and to organise effectively their work. This aspect of the tool is especially valuable for students writing individual studies⁵⁹, as it encourages them to keep meticulous records of their work.

2.15.2.1 Advantages:

- Logbooks allow students to keep a written record of their progress in their own way, perhaps making them more comfortable writing these types of assessments.
- The use of logbooks means tutors are provided with written evidence of students' progress, therefore eliminating the need to be present during practical sessions, and thus reducing their workload.
- The above function of logbooks also offers students a greater degree of freedom in carrying out their practical work and forcing them to develop their independent learning skills.
- The practical experience gained through this type of assessment is invaluable for students' future employability.
- It encourages students to be meticulous and organised in both practical and written aspects of their work.
- The handing in of logbooks reduces the need for continuous marking for tutors.

2.15.2.2 Constraints:

- Students will require explicit guidance on what information must be included in the logbooks, and on any presentational expectations.
- It may be difficult consistently and accurately to apply criteria to logbooks, as there will inevitably be a degree of variation in the way students' record their work.
- This type of assessment encompasses all the students' practical work, and therefore takes considerable time for internal examiners to examine and to grade.
- Writing up a significant quantity of the practical work undertaken can consume a lot of the students' time, and it may lead to them

⁵⁹ Year 3 and above.

exceeding the word limit if restrictions are not placed on the number of experiments covered, or the quantity of notes included.

- Students only receive feedback on their performance at the end of their studies.

2.16 Objective Structured Examination (OSE) - (Relevant to Faculty of Health)

This type of examination is designed specifically to assess the practical component within a course, module or programme. Students are presented with a series of practical scenarios which test specific learning outcomes and skills applicable to a particular discipline. The student is required to progress through a number of practical tasks at timed stations, where they are observed and graded by an examiner using pre-constructed assessment criteria. The student may be required to give either a verbal or written response.

Students receive prior knowledge of the assessment criteria for the OSE at the start of the course, module or programme. This allows them to incorporate those skills/areas into their learning, and thus improves the validity and reliability of the assessment itself. Students also receive guidance in preparing for such assessment tasks, primarily through formative scenario testing (including peer assessment elements) during their course of study.

OSE examinations are, as a rule, graded as pass or fail. A student must achieve a certain percentage to pass each station. The marks for these stations are then combined to produce an overall result, which again must exceed a certain percentage in order to constitute a pass. The number of stations, and the time-requirements can vary according to course, module or programme. Each examiner remains at their station throughout the course of the examination, and the students move around individually. Thus each station is marked independently of the others (similar to blind marking).

Additionally, there may also be a 'floating' internal moderator present, observing the process to ensure that equity and reliability are maintained. The grades are then moderated by the internal moderator, who verifies the results have been calculated accurately. The examination may also be videoed in order to facilitate external moderation of the assessment and its procedures.

Students receive feedback from both the examiners, and also those 'patients' involved in the examination.

There is a variation of the OSE which is used frequently within the Faculty of Health, known as an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). This type of examination uses the same format as OSE, to measure students' clinical skills, for example taking patient histories, or conducting physical assessments of patients.

2.16.1 Advantages of OS(C)E:

- OS(C)E enables students to demonstrate their practical skills in context, thus enabling assessors to measure and to assess students' competency levels in readiness for practice. It also provides students with experience of scenarios relevant to their future employability.
- This style of assessment allows staff to set tasks which would simply not be viable with more traditional (written) formats.
- The marking of each station by one examiner should provide continuity of results, by allowing examiners to focus on specific areas of the assessment criteria.

2.16.2 Constraints:

- The double time-constraints involved in OS(C)Es may only provide a cursory judgement of students' abilities. The short time given to each station/task may advantage those students with only a superficial knowledge of the subject, and not succeed in highlighting their areas of weakness. Conversely, this format may also lead to those students with greater skills and understanding, not being given sufficient opportunity or scope with which to excel.
- There can be difficulties in finding enough (appropriate) examiners and 'patients' for this type of assessment. Students may find the participation of University College staff or professionals with whom they are familiar, as 'patients' in the OS(C)E uncomfortable or distracting.
- The lack of anonymity in the marking process of these assessments may lead to problems concerning the reliability and equity of the results.
- This style of assessment tests students' ability to use a practical skill, but does not necessarily require them to demonstrate an understanding of the processes and reasoning behind it.

3 Linking Learning Outcomes and Assessment Tools

The tools described previously offer a selection of possible methods with which tutors can assess both students' written, practical and/or professional knowledge and skills. When considering using any of these tools tutors should bear in mind that their choice must be informed and in part determined by the learning outcomes for each particular assignment in the course, module or programme. It is therefore useful to consider some of the more generic categories of learning outcomes which may appear in courses, modules or programmes, and related modes of assessment.

The following extract from Oxford Brookes University offers a selection of appropriate methods of assessment for specific types of learning outcomes:

"When considering assessment methods, it is particularly useful to think first about what qualities or abilities you are seeking to engender in the learners. Nightingale et al (1996) provide eight broad categories of learning

outcomes which are listed below. Within each category some illustrative methods are suggested.

1. Thinking critically and making judgements

(Developing arguments, reflecting, evaluating, assessing, judging)

- Essay
- Report
- Journal
- Letter of Advice to ... (about policy, public health matters ...)
- Present a case for an interest group
- Prepare a committee briefing paper for a specific meeting
- Book review (or article) for a particular journal
- Write a newspaper article for a foreign newspaper
- Comment on an article's theoretical perspective

2. Solving problems and developing plans

(Identifying problems, posing problems, defining problems, analysing data, reviewing, designing experiments, planning, applying information)

- Problem scenario
- Group Work
- Work-based problem
- Prepare a committee of enquiry report
- Draft a research bid to a realistic brief
- Analyse a case
- Conference paper (or notes for a conference paper plus annotated bibliography)

3. Performing procedures and demonstrating techniques

(Computation, taking readings, using equipment, following laboratory procedures, following protocols, carrying out instructions)

- Demonstration
- Role Play
- Make a video (write script and produce/make a video)
- Produce a poster
- Lab report
- Prepare an illustrated manual on using the equipment, for a particular audience
- Observation of real or simulated professional practice

4. Managing and developing oneself

(Working co-operatively, working independently, learning independently, being self-directed, managing time, managing tasks, organising)

- Journal
- Portfolio
- Learning Contract
- Group work

5. Accessing and managing information

(Researching, investigating, interpreting, organising information, reviewing and paraphrasing information, collecting data, searching and managing information sources, observing and interpreting)

- Annotated bibliography
- Project
- Dissertation
- Applied task
- Applied problem

6. Demonstrating knowledge and understanding

(Recalling, describing, reporting, recounting, recognising, identifying, relating & interrelating)

- Written examination
- Oral examination
- Essay
- Report
- Comment on the accuracy of a set of records
- Devise an encyclopaedia entry
- Produce an A - Z of ...
- Write an answer to a client's question
- Short answer questions: True/False/ Multiple Choice Questions (paper-based or computer-aided-assessment)

7. Designing, creating, performing

(Imagining, visualising, designing, producing, creating, innovating, performing)

- Portfolio
- Performance
- Presentation
- Hypothetical
- Projects

8. Communicating

(One and two-way communication; communication within a group, verbal, written and non-verbal communication. Arguing, describing, advocating, interviewing, negotiating, presenting; using specific written forms)

- Written presentation (essay, report, reflective paper etc.)
- Oral presentation
- Group work
- Discussion/debate/role play
- Participate in a 'Court of Enquiry'
- Presentation to camera
- Observation of real or simulated professional practice

Variety of assessment

It is interesting to note that the eight learning outcomes listed above would be broadly expected of any graduating learner from a higher education

[programme]...From learners' perspectives...it is important to offer variety...in the way they demonstrate their learning, and to help them to develop a well-rounded set of abilities by the time they graduate."⁶⁰

4. Widening Participation: designing effective assessment for all students

Just as students exhibit preferences for particular learning styles so does their response to particular modes of assessment. Widening participation has accentuated the differences that students have always exhibited when faced with particular modes of assessment. Strategies, such as closed book examinations and coursework essays, suit some students because they conform to a well rehearsed set of rules which, for the initiated, provide a comfortable and familiar assessment regime. However, for the uninitiated, or perhaps for some students from minority ethnic groups or different cultural backgrounds, these traditional modes can be a barrier to them demonstrating that learning outcomes have been achieved. We should, therefore, adopt a broad based assessment strategy, using a wide variety of methods to meet the different needs of students.

4.1 Hidden assessment demands

When designing assessments it is possible to add to the demands placed on the student by not recognising hidden requirements. Assessment criteria may be well stated but there may be other demands which are given no credit, yet provide a barrier for some students. For example, does demonstrating an understanding of the differences between two stances on an issue have to be achieved through a written argument? Would a verbal presentation offer an alternative that some students would prefer to demonstrate their understanding? Conversely a portfolio composed of many small assessed items may not be welcomed by students who like to have concerted opportunity to show their analytical skills through an extended piece of writing.

4.2 Using feedback to support students' learning

Tutors put a great deal of effort into assessing students' work but are often unconvinced about students' response to feedback they provide. If we want students to respond and benefit from feedback it has to have relevance to their achievement in future assessment tasks. Timely formative feedback is vital for students who are uncertain about their performance. In the early stages of a programme a lack of feedback is likely to lead to insecurity and de-motivation which can exacerbate a downward spiral of underperformance. Short tasks, with accompanying rapid feedback, build confidence students' self-awareness of their potential achievement. These should start as formative exercises but be clearly linked to the summative assessments within the programme which follow.

⁶⁰ Dunn, L., (2002), 'Selecting Methods of Assessment': *Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers Series*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Also available at: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/2_learnth/methods.html] (p.1-2).

4.3 Strategies for maximising assessment effectiveness

- Assessed tasks should attract sufficient student time and effort
- Tasks should engage the student in productive learning activity
- Students' effort should be spread as evenly as possible
- Orientation to the task should help students to perceive the demands of an assessment task
- Communication through guidance provided should offer clarity on expectations
- Sufficient and timely feedback should be provided
- Feedback should focus on learning not on the marks or the student
- Feedback should be closely linked to assessment criteria
- Feedback should be given at a level accessible to the student's sophistication
- Students should be required to receive and respond to feedback

5 Conclusion

In considering any of the methods of assessment described in this Handbook tutors should, as Dunn (2002) states, keep in mind that "The primary goal is to choose a method which most effectively assesses the objectives of the unit of study [whether course, module or programme]. In addition, choice of assessment methods should be aligned with the overall aims of the [programme], and may include the development of disciplinary skills (such as critical evaluation or problem solving) and support the development of vocational competencies (such as particular communication or team skills). Hence, when choosing assessment items it is useful to have one eye on the immediate task of assessing student learning in a particular unit of study, and another eye on the broader aims of the programme and the qualities of the graduating student. Ideally this is something you do with your academic colleagues so there is a planned assessment strategy across a programme [either through validation or revalidation processes]."⁶¹

By carefully considering the various purposes, principles, methods and procedures relating to assessment tutors will therefore be best placed to ensure students receive a comprehensive and appropriate learning and teaching experience. As stated in the *Assessment Policy*, the University College "...has a commitment to ensuring the quality and appropriateness of assessment..."⁶²

As such the Assessment Handbook (Enhancing Practice) forms part of this commitment, offering information and reference material on assessment methods and procedures which will further encourage the dissemination of good practice within the institution and assist in the continuous improvement of students learning experience.

⁶¹ Dunn, L., (2002), 'Selecting Methods of Assessment': *Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers Series*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Also available at: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/2_learnth/methods.html] (p. 1)

⁶² Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC) (2004) *Assessment Policy*. Canterbury: CCCUC. (p. 1)

Specific descriptors and marking criteria for the assessment tools described in this Handbook are currently being uploaded onto the LTEU website. It is intended that a complete set will become available over the next six months.

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Appendix

8 Appendix 1 Assessment Tool Grid

| <u>Tool</u> | <u>Variations</u> | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Unseen Examination | Unseen Examination | Unseen Practical Examination | Unseen, Open-Book Examination |
| | Computerised Slide Test | Film Viewing Examination | Scenario Based Unseen Examination |
| Part-Seen Examination | Prepared Written Paper | Timed Seen Paper | Case Study Based Examination |
| Essay | Close Textual Analysis | Research Proposal | Problem Solving Essay |
| | Written analysis | Situational Analysis | Foreign Language Assignment |
| | Reflective Essay | Critical Reflection | Special Study (Written) |
| | Critical Narrative | Analysis | Critical Appraisal/Evaluation |
| | Written Evaluation | Final Integrative Report | Extended Essay |
| Dissertation | Empirical Study | | |
| Case Study | Teaching Study | Theoretical Case Study | Patient/Client Assessment |
| | Diagnostic assignment | Case Presentation | Critical Incident Reflection |
| Data Analysis/Data Handling | Individual Statistical Report | | |
| Project Work | Library Search | Research Project | Use of Cartographic Techniques |
| | Research Exercise | Preparation of Prospectus | Production of Software Artefact |
| | Micro-Teaching Exercise | Preparation of Booklet | Design/Draw Map (by hand/by computer) |
| | Small Scale Investigation | Quality Improvement Project | Practice Learning Agency Study |
| | UK Based Tour (Written) | Art Exhibition | |
| Group Work | Group Fieldwork Report | Group Presentation | Course Design Document & Scrutiny |
| | Team Project | Practical Project | |
| Report | Enquiry Report | Observation Research Report | Site Design & accompanying Report |
| | Professional Practice Report | | |
| Practical (Laboratory) Work | Laboratory Logbook | Work Based Appraisal | Practical Theology Assignment |
| | Practical Session | Work-based tasks | Laboratory Report |
| | Studio Based Practice | Practical Report | Assessed Laboratory Work |
| | Fieldwork Report | | |
| Objective Structured Examination | OSCE | | |
| Peer Assessment | Debate and Chairing of Peer | Question-Setting by Students | Group Discussion |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Self-assessment | Student Diary | Reflective Journal | |
| Portfolio | Coursework File | Record of development | Personal Development Portfolio |
| | Reflective Portfolio | Language Portfolio | Art Portfolio |
| | Teaching Log | Work Log | Collaborative Practical Development Log |
| | Reflection on Practice | Development proposal | Mathematics Learning Pack |
| | Record of Practice | Progress Review | Professional & Clinical Development |
| | Reflective Workbook | Personal Statement | Professional Role Development |
| Problem Based Learning | PBL Log | | |
| Posters | Poster Presentation (Individual) | Poster Presentation (Group) | |
| Reviews | Comparative Critique | Critical Review | |
| Oral Assessment | Language Oral Presentation | Individual presentation | Presentation of research findings |
| | Verbal Report | Viva Voce | Video/Audio assignment |
| | Seminar Presentation | | |
| Computer-Assisted Assessment | IT Test | Statistics Test | Multiple Choice Questions * |
| Professional Practice Assessment | APT (PPPD) | | |

* Also classed as an Examination tool