

Baseline Principles for Assessment and Feedback of Blended Learning

This document should be used in conjunction with the QMUL Assessment Strategy, for which it does not intend to become a substitute. Rather, these guidelines illustrate how the QMUL Assessment Strategy applies in a Blended Learning context emerging from the COVID19 crisis, but also as the Higher Education landscape will invariably be transformed as a consequence.

Principles of QMUL Assessment Strategy Relevant to Blended Learning:

Principles from QMUL Assessment Strategy are shown below in *italics*, while aspects particularly relevant to Blended Learning that are mapped to the former are shown in **bold**.

1-Programme Level Assessment/Alignment with Learning Outcomes:

Balance and Structure: While it is relevant to use assessment to maximise student engagement, over-assessment should be avoided, especially summative assessment. Focus on Learning Outcomes mapped across a Programme. Repetition might be relevant on a delivery/design basis to reinforce concepts and evolve deeper learning outcomes. However, summative assessment should be streamlined across modules. Consider assessing Learning Outcomes at the “end of a concept-cycle” within a programme (i.e. the module in which the deeper learning outcomes related to specific themes/concepts are taught and explored).

For example, if concept A is introduced in module 1, developed in module 2, and further explored in a professional/research context in module 3, unless students are to achieve substantially different learning outcomes in each module, summative assessment in relation to concept A should be avoided, at least, in module 1.

2-Assessment for Learning/Feedback literacy/Students as partners:

Engagement and workload: Consider using *assessment for learning* to embed *formative feedback* in your teaching, in order to increase student engagement with blended learning. Remember that “teacher-telling” (feedback “given” to students by teachers after summative assessment) has little value to students and becomes burdensome for staff. Focus efforts towards the beginning of semester to *develop student feedback literacy*, for example, through the use of high-quality exemplars with detailed feedback. Critically, develop student ability for peer-to-peer feedback based on *authenticity*: peer-to-peer feedback correctly applied mimics professional/graduate/academic “ways of thinking, doing and being in the discipline”. Progressively work towards students becoming independent and supportive of each other through peer-to-peer feedback.

A good way to use assessment for learning leading to formative feedback as tool for student engagement is to make it a step towards summative assessment by designing shorter, interconnected tasks.

For example: introducing assessment for learning tasks within your teaching, even if short such as a quiz, gives staff and students the opportunity to engage in a dialogue about how to think/act like a practitioner in the discipline, not just about content. Especially if this is followed with the introduction of good exemplars containing detailed feedback from staff. This can be used in a discussion task on

identifying from the detailed feedback what generic strategies can be adopted by students/practitioners to perform well in these tasks. Design a subsequent task with students/groups providing feedback to each other, on the basis of the generic principles describes in the previous task, followed by a discussion with staff, where the focus should lie on providing feedback. Note that discussions of content and feedback about content, while not necessarily the focus, will organically occur within a more general context of learning to think/act within the discipline, essential for peer-feedback. Teaching activities such as these, are bound to elicit much higher engagement from students than a lecture, as live participation provides a much richer learning experience.

3-Dialogic and inclusive approach:

Programme and School Focus (Student and Staff Development): In addition to designing teaching activities to embed formative feedback as integral to learning in each module, implementing change requires sending clear messages of the chosen approach as relevant to each discipline. Identifying and offering support for student specific needs should be addressed at this stage. This calls for Programme and School-level student development and training activities to make this message clear. These should go hand-in-hand with developing *staff feedback literacy*.

For example, this could be achieved by beginning, middle and end of semester School-based/led activities where this approach is introduced (“what does it imply?, why is it relevant?”), reinforced (explore how this is working for both staff and students in a dialogic manner; agree recommendations) and evaluated, with students as partners.

The Baseline Principles for Designing Assessment and Feedback for Blended Learning:

Transparency and validity

- identify the learning outcomes you want to assess (as clearly as possible) in terms of both the subject-matter content and/or the set of skills to be tested
- review alignment: learning outcomes, educational approaches and assessment
- clarify how assessment is organised and provide explicit guidance on the requirements
- create channels for communication (openness about processes) and links to networks of support

Balance and Structure

- avoid overassessment (consider the content and learning outcomes) and design the assessment to accommodate different learning outcomes over the whole programme
- create a range of tasks (where feasible) to elicit evidence of the student’s ability considering the learning outcomes
- streamline workload and ensure student effort will be distributed reasonably evenly across the semester
- ensure students will be clear about ‘goals and standards’ so that students can direct their effort appropriately
- separate formative and summative assessment (making the links visible)
- coordinate efforts with other modules (and timetabling) to avoid overload in specific moments
- provide a structure that allows students to plan their learning journey

Reliability and Integrity

- review and adapt criteria and rubrics when assessing, consider the unfamiliar educational context for students
- use robust methods recognised by your School/programme to record and store assessment data and submissions. This is bound to be QMplus for the majority of staff, with exceptions on a programme/School case-by-case basis

Inclusion

- involve the students in setting expectations, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes of learning
- require equivalent effort on the part of the student compared to f2f
- provide opportunities for students to trial any unfamiliar assessment method and detailed guidance
- identify needs for arrangements to accommodate learner needs
- provide training and development opportunities at Programme/School level to students and staff where appropriate

Academic Integrity and Authenticity

- customise the assessments, frame questions that require justification/ critique application of subject-knowledge and introduce randomisation
- align assessments to the professional/academic practice in the discipline (authenticity)

Establishment of teaching and learning partnerships and opportunities for co-creation with students

- invite students to create/share assessment related materials
- establish a clear dialogic approach to feedback based on timeliness, relevance and purpose (using a variety of synchronous and asynchronous methods to respond to different needs and contexts)
- promote opportunities for self assessment and peer assessment and feedback