

9.1 Principles of assessment

Introduction

Assessment is the process by which Education for Health appraises the knowledge, understanding and skills of its students. Our assessment policies and procedures therefore need to be a cornerstone of our approach to assuring the academic standards of our awards. Assessment also plays a key role in the student learning process, and consequently is crucially important to the quality of the learning opportunities provided to students.

Definition of Assessment

Assessment is defined in the QAA Quality Code (2012) Chapter B6 as *“any processes that appraise an individual’s knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills. There are many different forms of assessment, serving a variety of purposes. These include:*

- *promoting student learning by providing the student with feedback, normally to help improve his/her performance*
- *evaluating student knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills*
- *providing a mark or grade that enables a student’s performance to be established, and may also be used to make progress decisions*
- *enabling the public (including employers) and higher education providers, to know that an individual has attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the awarding institution and agreed UK norms, including the frameworks for higher education qualifications. This may include demonstrating fitness to practise or meeting other professional requirements”.*

‘Assessment’ is a generic term for a set of processes that measure the outcomes of students’ learning in terms of knowledge acquired, understanding developed and skills gained.

Summative assessment is moderated assessment which provides a measure of achievement or failure in respect of a student’s performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the course of study and which determines progression and award.

Formative assessment is designed to provide students with feedback on progress and inform development. It does not contribute towards the students’ progression or awards but it will help students to prepare for summative assessment.

It is expected that care will be taken to ensure that there is an appropriate mix of formative and summative assessment within each module. Assessment requirements will be integrated into all curriculum planning and design and be directly aligned with intended learning outcomes.

Principles

1. Assessment will be valid

Assessment will be explicitly designed to measure student achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and all intended learning outcomes will be summatively assessed.

The processes for the approval of new modules and programmes, and for amending existing modules and programmes, will ensure that assessment is an integral part of module and programme design, and the ongoing validity of assessment will be considered through annual and periodic review.

2. Assessment will be reliable

To ensure the level of consistency that is necessary for assessment to be reliable, all awards at the same academic level will be aligned with the relevant level descriptor.

There will be clear and consistent policies and procedures for the marking of assessed work, and for the quality assurance of the assessment process. These processes will be supported by the external examiner system, with all external examiners being asked to report on the reliability of assessment.

3. Assessment will be equitable

Education for Health recognises that different assessment methods may be appropriate for different learning styles, and it therefore encourages where possible the use of a diversity of assessment methods to allow all students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Education for Health is also aware of the need to make individual assessment arrangements for students with disabilities and other special requirements, and will ensure that appropriate processes are in place to consider and address such needs.

4. Assessment will be explicit and transparent

Prior to undertaking any assessment task, students will be clearly informed of the purpose and requirements of the task and will be provided with the specific assessment criteria that will be used for marking it. Feedback to students will be related to the stated learning outcomes and specific assessment criteria.

5. Assessment will support the student learning process

All assessment tasks influence the way in which students approach their learning, and this will be taken into account in the design of all assessment tasks.

In every module all students will receive timely feedback on assessed work, which is aligned with the outcomes being assessed, and the criteria against which these outcomes are assessed, and therefore allows them to identify how they can improve their performance. Students will receive written feedback on all summatively assessed work apart from examinations.

6. Assessment will be efficient

Assessment will be efficient for both students and staff such that learning outcomes are not overly assessed and that knowledge and skills can be sampled.

7. Assessment outcomes will be monitored, and this monitoring used to support the enhancement of assessment policy and practice

Student performance in assessment tasks will be monitored on an annual basis by Module Review Committees, to ensure that assessment continues to be consistent with the principles of assessment outlined above. The results of this monitoring will be reported to Academic Board and the relevant accrediting body.

8. Staff involved in assessment will be competent to undertake their responsibilities in this area

Education for Health will ensure that staff involved in the assessment process will have appropriate experience and training.

Verification of Assessment

Draft assessment and reassessment tasks for each module will be produced simultaneously by the module leader to ensure that assessment at each opportunity is equitable. Assessment task(s) will:

- meet the requirements detailed within module specifications;
- assess the learning outcomes;
- be set at the correct level

The Programme Lead will agree the assessments for course(s) covered within the Programme Specification to ensure breadth of assessment activity across each level of study. Once all assessment task(s) have been agreed they will be subject to scrutiny by the Assessment Committee. Following this scrutiny, and any subsequent modification, assessment tasks will be published to students.

Every component of assessment that contributes to an award is subject to external examiner moderation. This ensures the maintenance of standards both internally and in comparison with similar courses delivered at other institutions.

The external examiner will be asked to comment on the suitability of the assessment briefs with regard to the unit specification, level of work expected and in relation to the standards of the tasks in comparison with similar courses at other institutions. S/he is also asked to comment upon the clarity of the task, and on the guidance provided.

Communication of assessment information to students

Programme / module teams will ensure that students are provided with the assignment brief for each assessment task, well in advance of the submission date, and normally at the start of the module. The assignment brief will indicate clearly how marks for individual pieces of work will be apportioned, and will include the assessment criteria, submission dates and arrangements.

Students will be made aware of the purpose of different assessment tasks and how they link to the learning outcomes of the module.

Adjustments for disabled students

The assessment needs of disabled students, including specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia, are supported in compliance with the Equality Act 2010

Language of assessment

All teaching and assessment within modules leading to an academic award will be in the English language.

Anonymous marking

Anonymous marking is the process undertaken to avoid the possibility of bias entering the marking process. To this end, wherever possible, the identity of students should not be apparent to markers and work should only be identified by student number and initials. Where the method of assessment does not allow anonymous marking (e.g. dissertations, presentations, oral examinations, practical examinations) alternative methods of marking to mitigate the possible effect of bias will be clearly explained.

For some types of assessment it may be impractical either to second mark or to mark anonymously. Methods by which students may be protected from unfair or biased assessments in these situations will be made explicit by the relevant Education Lead.

Marking and Moderation

Each programme/module team will have effective systems and procedures in place for the internal moderation of all methods of assessment for all units. Internal moderation of summative assessment marks which have been generated by a first marker (or marking team) are scrutinised so as to verify the appropriateness of the marking based on the consistent application of clear, fair, common and transparent assessment criteria and marking schemes, drawn from the relevant intended learning outcomes, and understood by both students and markers. The process will also include a second judgement, of a sample of scripts across the range of marks to confirm the breadth of achievement.

The term “second marking” denotes a process whereby the marks allocated by a first marker(s) are examined and verified, by someone not associated with the first marking, to be fair and consistent with the marking scheme.

Feedback on assessed work

Education for Health provides feedback to students in order to help promote learning and facilitate improvement. It is provided following formative assessment and summative assessment. All feedback will:

- relate to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria;
- be relevant and meaningful;
- be motivating, clear and constructive;
- be critical but with the intention of enabling student development by consolidating learning and advising on means of improvement;
- be returned on submitted work for assessment within six weeks.

If, for reasons outside the module team's control, the date for feedback cannot be met, this must be communicated clearly to all students, together with a definitive revised date. The nature and the extent of feedback that a student may expect should be indicated for each assessment task at the time it is set. Students should be made aware of whether their work will be returned at the time feedback is provided. Feedback must be provided as soon as possible after the student has completed the assessment task