

Assessment methods

COURSEWORK			
Method	Description	Advantages	Considerations
Report	Review of given subject with due regard to secondary literature and contextual exploration of a given topic.	Good for assessing development of arguments, reflection, information literacy, judgement and expression.	Potential for surface level learning of knowledge and facts, risk of plagiarism and tendency for development of assessed work to become isolating or an overtly individualised experience.
Book/research paper review	Review of prescribed academic text requiring analysis and evaluation of concepts, ideas, research methods, and cohesion of research arguments.	Facilitates deep level of engagement with secondary research. Focused and standardised format supports consistency of assessment outcomes.	Potential for 'copy-and-paste' editing approach to assessment preparation and for isolation of assessment development process.
Essay	Assigned task that requires the student to demonstrate their involvement and production of a 'tangible' coherent written outcome in their own words.	Personalisable and flexible with potential for provision of standardised or optional title selection. Focused context for practice of academic referencing techniques.	Difficult to connect directly with identifiable vocational parallels. Potentially overtly academic in format and difficult to engage effective learning.
Dissertation	Extended text documenting defined primary and secondary research. Subject definition often a significant component of the prescribed task. Primarily associated with later stages of undergraduate and postgraduate study.	Closely aligned with academic conventions and professional research environment. Open opportunity for personalised learning and for innovation.	Traditionally very text-based with the potential for research and enquiry to be subsumed within a process of writing and text editing.
Mock newspaper article	More journalistic approach to the review of information and the identification of key data.	Accessible and personalisable format. Potential for collation of group work into peer reviewable outcomes.	Potential for informality and lack of criticality.
Mock news broadcast	On camera presentation of research material requiring scripting, verbal dexterity and clarity of expression.	Dynamic format with potential for sharing of outcomes more widely. Engaging and exciting format.	Potentially technically complex with resource implications.

Journal article	Mapped to specific editorial and formatting guidelines, journal articles are a useful formative or summative assessment tool.	Provides formative opportunity for development of scholarly writing techniques.	Potentially overtly prescriptive format.
Annotated bibliography	Format for substantiation of secondary research and literature review work. Abbreviated text review summaries of set reading.	Most efficient format for assessment of secondary research of set texts.	Limited scope for synthesis of knowledge and understanding.
Literature review	Formal component of secondary research projects. Primarily mapped to specific topics rather than set texts.	Flexible and personalisable.	Potentially somewhat text centred with emphasis on writing and editing rather than synthesis and understanding.
Research poster	Development of single page poster communicating complex research data in accessible form.	Opportunity for visualisation of ideas and for interaction with knowledge and information in different domains. Outcomes shareable.	Potential for supplementary design, visual literacy, specialist software knowledge and skills development.
Blog or wiki	Online coursework assessments developed incrementally and/or collaboratively. Generally less formal in tone than more traditional academic writing assignments.	Wikis can be developed collaboratively and can encourage group work. Openness of blogs and scope for comment and response encourages focused effort.	Openness of student work can be emotionally challenging for learners.
Mock research funding bid	Mapped to specific funding guidelines, learners pitch their research ideas through a given evaluation framework.	Encourages comprehension by learners and can help measure students' innovation or evaluation.	Potentially overtly simulated learning experience.
Lab report	Documented report of lab-based research activity.	Encourages critical reflection and evaluation, and formalises planning and research methods adaptation.	Potential for lab report development to become a distraction in the experimentation process.
Devised encyclopedia entry	Development of succinct definitions and explanations of complex concepts, ideas or theories.	Encourages development of language skills, text editing and brevity of expression. Enforces focus on key points.	Potentially overtly focused on text rather than concepts and ideas.
Critical review	Literature review with specific emphasis on challenging concepts, ideas and theory.	Encourages debate and criticism of concepts and ideas. Can sponsor development of confidence and critical thinking.	Can be difficult to promote criticism effectively without identifiable sources open to criticism.
Problem solution	Open opportunity to consider specified problem and to develop meaningful responses to problem resolution.	Can encourage lateral thinking and innovation. Adaptable according to subject context.	Can be difficult to promote lateral thinking and innovation.

Personal development plan	Preparation of a structured plan for development of given knowledge and skills.	Can encourage more focused planning and consequent perception of progress and achievement.	Potential for planning to become more abstract and idealised.
Reflective diary	Potentially developed in the form of a blog, reflective accounts of development of given area of study.	Good context through which to develop more reflective approach to study.	Potential for overt informality and lack of criticality.
Project	Open, often learner designated context of study with longitudinal development and realisation. Outcomes may include text, practical artefacts, presentations etc.	Can assess students' creative and innovative ideas, transforming their understanding of one subject to solve an alternative problem.	Potential for development of assessed work to become isolating if developed individually and for group dynamics to compromise team-based project work.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENTS			
General description of non-text-based assessed work involving more physical processes or leading to event-based or artefact-based outcomes.			
Method	Description	Advantages	Considerations
Individual presentation	Individual presentation using material aids to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and insight.	Emotionally challenging format requiring and encouraging deep learning and development of transferable skills.	Can be significantly challenging and lead to severe anxiety in some learners.
Group presentation	Presentation of project outcomes or research work prepared in teams/groups.	More dynamic and interactive and can encourage shared learning.	Can be useful means of reducing individual anxiety in presentation contexts.
Design pitch	Vocationally orientated pitch of given concept within the context of a defined brief.	Vocationally relevant and opportunity for development of transferable skills. Potential for involvement by industrial partners.	Can be logistically challenging to develop 'real-world' context of assessment.
Fieldwork	Assessed work centred on dynamic, external field-work.	Physically dynamic and involving learning in different contexts and spaces.	Logistically complex organisation issues.
Observation report	Relevant to forms of ethnographic study, observational reports document reflection of specific research activities.	Can promote deeper levels of engagement with observed research events and activities.	Documentation during observation sessions can prove distracting.

Adapted from Wilson, C. (2012) *Assessment methods and descriptors*. HEA Toolkit Project, LTA Group.

Role play simulation	Simulation of given learning scenario and opportunity for projection of ideas.	Highly dynamic. Encourages deep learning.	Simulation, improvisation and more theatrical formats can prove difficult for some learners. May be more appropriate for some disciplines.
Exhibition or demonstration	Often associated with arts-based disciplines but with relevance to many other subjects, practical outcomes are presented or exhibited for wider appraisal.	Excellent context for sharing of outcomes and opportunity for wider critique.	Can be logistically challenging but technology does provide opportunity for more virtual approaches.
Creative portfolio	Primarily associated with arts-based disciplines, portfolio work draws together a body of work developed within a defined brief.	Highly personalised and transferable outcomes. Highly adaptable and flexible format.	Potential for highly variable outcomes making summative assessment complex.
Performance	Associated primarily with arts-based disciplines, performance events test learners' ability to realise stipulated technical abilities under pressure of an audience and formal assessment.	Directly relevant to vocational context and highly focused source of learning motivation.	Can prove challenging if not accompanied by necessary development of coping mechanisms and preparatory techniques.
Vocational placement	Formal, mentored and observed placement in a given vocational context.	Excellent opportunity for development of work experience and to improve employability.	Difficult to organise for large cohorts and management of learning can prove logistically challenging.
Mock interview	Organisation of a mock interview related to a specific job, industrial role, or other opportunity.	Excellent context for development of transferable skills.	Simulation can produce superficial engagement.

EXAMINATIONS	General description of time-constrained, individual assessment with short time-frames. Whilst traditional written exam papers and multiple choice tests remain valuable for efficiency of marking and consistency of outcomes, there are many other forms of examination assessment.		
Method	Description	Advantages	Considerations
Closed book	Traditional examination method requiring recall of facts and information plus some synthesis of knowledge.	Equity of assessment and consistency of cohort assessment outcomes. Efficiency of assessment processing.	Can be alienating for some learners and can encourage narrow range of skills development and surface learning.

Revealed question exam	Formal examination with exam question published with time for preparation and research.	More reflective of real-world application of knowledge and can reduce anxiety and abstract approaches to exam preparation.	Can exacerbate surface learning problems.
Open book	Exam allowing use of research sources.	Encourages development of scholarly approaches and more sophisticated information literacy.	Can compromise ownership and lead to surface learning.
Essay-based	Time-constrained development of discursive text in response to set question.	Personalisable and flexible.	Inefficient in assessment processing but can promote deeper learning in research preparation.
Multiple choice	Exam with selection of answers from a given range.	Efficient processing and completion. Potential for use of technology to automate marking processes.	Potential for surface learning and inaccurate results as a consequence of guesswork.
Computer-based	General term for integrated use of software to develop more dynamic examination formats. Can lead to incorporate of more dynamic graphical, videographic, audio-based, and media-based examination content.	More flexible and dynamic examination.	Development of computer-based assessment can be time-consuming and logistically challenging in organisation.
Time-constrained practical / OSCE	Relevant to a wide range of subjects, time-constrained practical challenges are realised related to specific technical knowledge and skills.	Vocationally relevant and dynamic assessment.	Can be logistically complex and require significant resourcing.
Oral examination	Assesses student ability to present complex ideas in a structured logical way.	Flexible and personalisable.	Can be time consuming to manage with large cohorts.
In class quiz	Quick self-evaluation assessment useful for development of ongoing learning.	Quick feedback through self-evaluation. Potential for more dynamic approaches through modelling of broadcast quiz formats.	Can be difficult to organise quickly.
Student generated quiz	Quiz developed by learners through collaborative submission of individual questions.	Dynamic, inclusive and fun assessment format.	Can be complex to organise and may not cover full range of necessary topics.
Debate	Formal Socratic process exploring given topics and subjects.	Can encourage critical thinking, rhetorical skills and evaluation of different perspectives.	Time consuming and potential to favour the verbally fluent.