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## Tip sheet – Policy implications for assessment design

In January 2021, a number of changes to the [assessment policy](#) came into effect. These were designed to encourage a student-centred focus and to better support student success through assessment. The major changes associated with policy implications for assessment design involve:

- reducing the number of assessment activities within topics
- only including exams where they are required for professional registration or accreditation or are the most appropriate form of assessing student achievement of learning outcomes
- only including attendance as a component of the topic's final grade where it can be linked to demonstration of achievement of learning outcomes
- changing larger assessment activities that make up a major percentage of the final topic grade, so they are clearly scaffolded with staged opportunities for students to review their learning progress
- moderating topic assessment design across three stages in the assessment cycle.

Other changes, such as those linked to the grading scheme, require an emphasis on grades over marks. This particular change may involve adjustments to assessment rubrics, so you no longer emphasise marks and students are encouraged to focus on the feedback they receive to help improve their grades. Extensions, resubmissions and supplementary assessments are not covered in this Tip sheet, as they are not aspects of assessment design, these aspects will be covered elsewhere.

As noted in the Learning and Teaching Blog (Feb, 2021) [Assessment policy changes: So, what should I do with my assessments now?](#), many of the changes to assessments identified above need to be in place by 2022 to align with the [Assessment Practice Procedures](#). You may find Laurillard's (2012) learning types (acquisition, collaboration, discussion, investigation, practice and production) useful when reflecting on your changes to assessments.

### Reducing the number of assessment activities

While there is no set number of required assessments, student feedback has raised concerns about the number of assessment items, especially where students are undertaking a fulltime load which often involves four topics per semester. If each topic includes a minimum of three assessments, the student must submit 12 assessment pieces over the 12 weeks of the study period. Once a student demonstrates they have met a learning outcome, there is no need to assess their ability to meet it again, as all assessment should be linked to learning outcomes. Provide students with a range of opportunities to determine they have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills through formative activities for themselves (self-assessment quizzes, group discussions, online discussion forums, in-class debates, etc.) before requiring them to complete the formative assessment piece.

### Revisiting examinations

If a formal examination is not required for professional registration or accreditation, you need to determine whether students can meet the [learning outcomes](#) through a different form of assessment or via other coursework requirements. If the learning outcome is predominantly about students recalling the knowledge they have acquired and applying it to a specific situation under pressure an exam may be appropriate. The [Tip sheet – Appropriate use of exams](#) provides advice on the appropriateness of exams and suggests alternatives.

### Revisiting attendance

There are some circumstances where student attendance may be required, for example, so you can assure an accrediting or professional body that safe practices have been demonstrated or competencies met. If neither of these apply, it is not appropriate to include attendance as a component of assessment of

assessment because there is no guarantee that a student’s presence in the learning space means they have acquired any skills or knowledge. Given assessment needs to be designed to assess the learning outcome, students should be required to engage in an activity that leads to learning or supports their learning. Depending on what students are required to learn, engagement in different activities may be appropriate, so their participation in an activity, rather than their attendance is assessed. Numerous activities engage students. Table 1 indicates links engaging activities with Laurillard’s (2012) learning types.

Acquisition	Collaboration	Discussion	Investigation	Practice	Production
Is learning which occurs when learners are					
listening, reading or websites watching demos or videos	collaborating and mainly involves discussion, practice, and production. It can include building on investigations and acquisition.	required to discuss their ideas and questions or challenge and respond to ideas and questions from others.	exploring, comparing and critiquing the texts, documents and resources that reflect the concepts and ideas being taught.	adapting their actions to the task goal and using the feedback to improve their next action.	motivated to consolidate what they have learned through the articulation of current conceptual understanding and it is used in practice.
Examples include:					
Quizzes, discussions, regurgitating information	Collaboration in group tasks, commenting on or contributing to a blog or forum post	Debates, discussions, mock interviews	Debates, role plays, developing a collaborative wiki	Experiments, practice exercises, simulation	Self and peer evaluations, presentations

Table 1: Links between engaging assessment activities and learning types

## Scaffolding larger assessments

Scaffolding involves continually developing knowledge and skills based on what is already known. Where larger assessment activities make up a high percentage of the final topic grade, students require opportunities to receive ongoing feedback and review their learning progress so they do not suddenly fail a topic because they have not had opportunity to develop the skills or knowledge to do so. Students should be provided with opportunities to assess their learning and focus on the areas where they need to acquire skills to demonstrate capacity to meet learning outcomes prior to submitting the final assessment.

## Moderation

Moderation provides an opportunity to check the integrity of assessments by having colleagues review how you are ascertaining students are meeting the learning outcomes of your topics. It is required at three separate stages of the assessment cycle: 1/ topic design; 2/ during the teaching period and 3/ when submitting final grades. The [Good Practice Guide on Moderation](#) and associated Tip sheets ([Moderating assessment design](#) and [Moderating grading and feedback](#)) provide further detail on all three of these activities.

## References

Laurillard, D. (2012) *Teaching as Design Science: Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology*, New York: Routledge.