Assessment at UCL
Guiding principles
UCL seeks to inspire its students and equip them with the knowledge and skills that they need to be leaders of the future.

All of our students will develop the capacity to participate in the research process and the creation of knowledge.

They will understand the 'edge of knowledge' and learn how to deal with incomplete knowledge and hypotheses.

Our programmes will challenge students to think critically and independently, and they will become confident problem solvers. They will develop the ability to work well in teams, and to communicate complex information effectively.

With these skills, our graduates will make a significant contribution to society and excel in the workplace.

Assessment and feedback are vital in facilitating and shaping students’ learning and need to reflect these aspirations.

Consequently, assessment at UCL:

1. Upholds and guarantees the highest academic standards

Our academic standards are set at the highest level, and the education we provide seeks to enable students to attain those standards. Robust, rigorous, transparent and timely assessment is fundamental to the maintenance of our academic standards.

2. Is integral to the student experience and to the quality of students’ learning

We recognise that modes of assessment frame the ways in which students engage with the curriculum.

The types of assessment offered should demonstrate our commitment to globally focused, research-based education, and provide sufficient challenge and motivation to students to facilitate learning.

Assessment for a piece of work must be aligned with the intended learning outcomes (for that piece of work and for the programme overall) and with the way it has been taught.

Assessment outcomes should also be used to help staff to evaluate teaching methods and course content, by helping with the identification of material that has not been understood.
3
Is proportionate and takes account of the programme context

In order to ensure that students are neither under nor over-assessed, and to facilitate coherence, it is important that module assessments are designed and implemented with the programme context in mind.

Assessment tasks should relate to the stage students have reached in a programme: formative assessment supports students to understand the assessment process and the criteria which apply, and formative assessment tasks and comprehensive guiding feedback are also crucial to students’ success in summative assessment.

Assessment design should take account of the inter-relationship between these types of assessment.

4
Encourages student understanding of, and participation in, the assessment process

Students need to develop the ability to identify the characteristics of high-quality work, and to apply this understanding to their own work.

Students should understand what marks and grades signify, and should understand what they need to do to improve.

We are committed to engaging with students on assessment issues, and to developing assessment models which have the confidence of the student body.

We acknowledge that many students, especially those who have been educated in the UK, are familiar with the principles of ‘assessment for learning’ and benefit from direct participation in self assessment and peer assessment.

We should draw on this experience to encourage all students, from all backgrounds, to reflect on their achievements and to determine their success in meeting the high standards required to attain the learning outcomes of the modules for which they have registered.
5  Is underpinned by timely, constructive feedback systems

Feedback allows students to observe their performance, reflect on their achievements and develop further.

Timely feedback, and opportunities for dialogue about that feedback, facilitate student learning and are an integral part of a successful assessment system.

Assessment design should build in opportunities for staff and students to discuss students’ performance and the implications of that performance for future success.

6  Responds to the diversity of our students and of the taught curriculum

We recognise that we have a diverse student body, from a range of education and cultural backgrounds, and that this diversity can mean that some modes of learning and assessment are unfamiliar to parts of the cohort.

Assessments should therefore be designed so that no student is prevented from succeeding because of cultural difference or their experience of a non-UK education system.

7  Exploits new technologies

We are committed to using and developing new technologies in assessment in order to enhance student learning and the overall student experience, as well as improving the timeliness and comprehensiveness of feedback returned.
8
Responds to the needs of employers, and to the employment context

A UCL degree carries with it a certain prestige amongst employers.
Assessment must be developed to maintain the standards which underpin that prestige, and to give employers confidence that our degrees reflect high standards of attainment and aptitude.

Wherever appropriate, assessments should reflect real-world challenges and test the skills which are in demand amongst employers.

In order to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required in leadership positions, students should have experience of a diverse spectrum of learning activities.

Some of these should also embody the experience of ‘real world’ complexity.

9
Is standardised and externally verified

All staff should be appropriately trained and supported to assess accurately and to understand the impact of assessment design on student learning.

The university is committed to supporting staff to understand the importance of standardising marks and marker reliability.

There is an institutional expectation that marks are moderated across a department.

The external examiner system provides UCL and its students with the assurance that the quality of its provision remains high.