



Assessment: a UCL ChangeMakers guide

10 top tips for getting the best out of your programme and
engaging effectively with your learning

By students, for students

#10 TIPS

TO GET THE MOST OUT OF ASSESSMENT.

Hello UCL students!

I know what you are thinking. Another guide. On assessment. That's the last thing I want to read right now. But the aim of this guide is not to bore you, quite the opposite.

This guide can help you to get the most out of being assessed at university, to make the experience more productive and less stressful.

If you are a first-year, this guide gives you all the basic information you need to set you off on the right track.

If you aren't a fresher, you might already be familiar with most assessment issues, however, this guide aims to reinforce, structure and refresh them!

This guide is part of a UCL ChangeMakers project. It has been written by students for students, to help you get the process of assessment right. It draws on focus group discussions with students, their top tips and from my experience as a Teaching Assistant here at UCL. I hope it helps – enjoy your reading!

**Francesca
2018**

Philip (BSc Economics):

“A student to student guide on assessment? I think it is a very good idea if it helps make assessment less daunting and more constructive!”

TIP #1

THINK HOLISTICALLY.

Assessment starts on day one of your module.

Academic staff design modules and programmes that harmonise:

- content
- learning outcomes
- assessment methods

You need to be familiar with the whole picture to get the most out of it! Assessment doesn't just occur at a specific point in time (the exam, the presentation, the final essay...): it is a process of learning that starts at the beginning of your modules.

Katie (BA History of Art):

"I still feel that I haven't mastered exams, and I know I do better in coursework than exams.. Perhaps I should focus on the whole picture and connect them better."

Be process oriented, not results driven!

TIP #2

KEEP IN MIND THAT WE ALL LEARN DIFFERENTLY.

Use assessment criteria and learning outcomes to reflect on your process of learning.

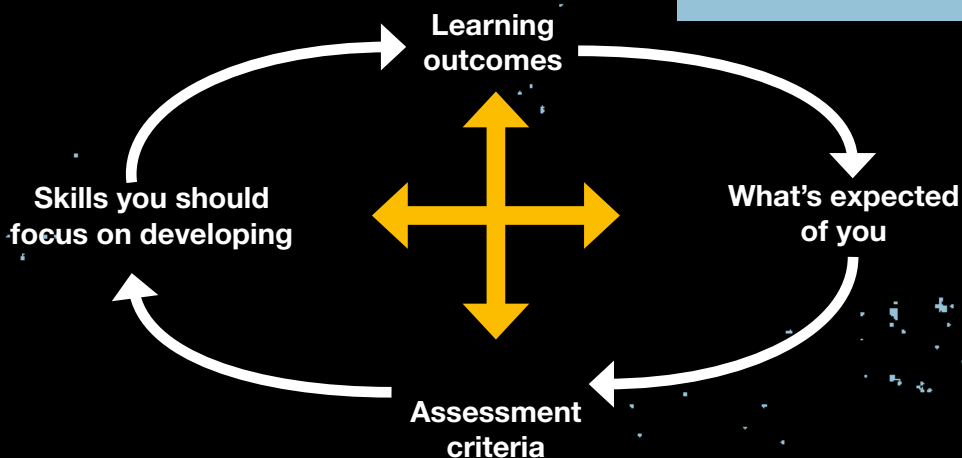
Learning outcomes are 'knowledge guidelines', that's why they are always at the beginning of your module handbook!

They help you to know what your lecturers expect you to have learnt by the end of the module.

Assessment criteria measure how effectively you meet the module's learning outcomes, and they are also invaluable guides to help you reflect on your process of learning.

Winnie (MA Digital Media, Culture and Education):

"I like being able to tailor my work to suit a particular module's learning outcomes, because I think that kind of mirrors what it's like in real life... You can't just approach all modules in the same way, their assessment criteria and learning outcomes help you develop different skills!"



TIP #3

BE STRATEGIC WITH FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT.

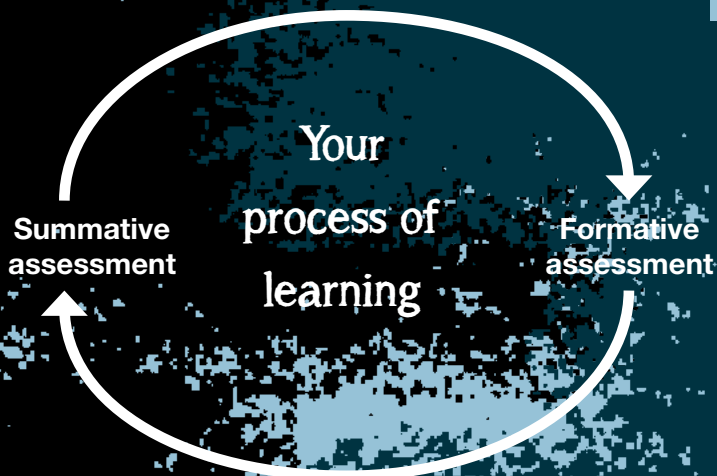
Together they build on your abilities and learning processes.

Formative assessments are assignments which don't count towards your final mark. They help you to improve your knowledge and get constructive feedback, which helps you understand where you are in your process of learning, to map it, and to plan where to focus next.

Summative assessments count towards the mark, indicating to what extent you have met the module's learning outcomes and mastered the skills you are supposed to learn.

Matthew (MSc Research Methods in Psychology):

"Formative assessment allows you to make mistakes and is a good way to learn... Having someone point out where and why it was wrong means you can try again next time and constantly improve."



TIP #4

ENGAGE ACTIVELY IN PEER-ASSESSMENT.

Get the most out of your peers' insights by assessing their work.

Peer-assessment is:

- an opportunity to see other people's work
- helpful for understanding how to apply assessment criteria
- a chance to reflect on your work
- an excellent way of giving and receiving feedback.

Giulia (BA History):

"You don't need to offer a specific grade. Peer-assessment just gets you thinking about applying marking criteria, about what is actually good, and what's bad in your work. It makes you reflect on your own way of studying, working, and thinking."

Don't compete with your peers:
they are **YOUR ALLIES.**

TIP #5

KNOW YOUR TEACHING TEAM.

Your teaching team is there to help: when it comes to marking your work they make sure they are fair and consistent.

When it comes to marking your work, academic staff follow specific regulations and remain impartial.

A second assessor checks the consistency of the first assessor's marking.

Moderation processes make sure that your mark is consistent with the module's assessment criteria.

Amy (BSc Anthropology):

"Well, I always prefer going straight to their offices and asking them as many questions as I can at the beginning of the module. This makes my life so much easier!"

Drop your lecturers an email or check their office hours and go have a chat with them!

TIP #6

BE SMART.

Check assessment and examination regulations well in advance.

When it comes to written exams:

Do you know where your exam is going to take place?

Have you checked what happens if you are late?

Have you printed out your candidate number?

Do you have a pen, maybe two, with you?

And a valid ID?

If it is a paper you need to upload onto Turnitin:

Have you attached the cover sheet?

Is the title there?

Are the reference list and all your quotes and citations OK? Plagiarism is a serious thing here!

Don't do it at the very last minute! Big documents take a long time to upload. Have you checked the penalties if you upload your document late?

Remember you can apply for a Summary of Reasonable Adjustments (SORA) if you need support in your assessment experience.

Get in contact with the Student Support and Wellbeing department!

TIP #7

READ YOUR FEEDBACK.

Build on the feedback you receive to support your learning.

Remember, we don't learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience.

Always reflect and learn from the feedback you receive from formative, summative and peer assessment. It is fundamental for your own personal and academic development.

Check out "Feedback: a UCL ChangeMakers guide"; it will give you great insights and advice!

Paola (MSci Applied Medical Sciences)

"I really make strategic use of the feedback I receive, especially because in my programme I have one big exam at the end of the year. The feedback helps me to continue checking and building on my knowledge towards the exam!"

TIP #8

BE SKILLS-WISE.

You get that job because of the skills, knowledge and achievements you have, not just because of the mark you get.

Assessment is a way to test how competently you master knowledge and skills, which is what both staff and employers want to see from you.

UCL Careers can help you to identify what career direction you want to take, why and what skills you will need to develop. This may help you choose modules that will build those skills and your mark will represent how well you master them.

UCL Careers can also help you to look back and identify what skills and abilities you have mastered on your course and how to market them.

Look for this sign on the UCL website!



Karl (BSc Economics with Statistics):

"If I say, 'I did well in my stats, and I have good programming skills,' that is far more sellable than saying 'oh yeah I did this module in this, this essay for this module, you know.'"

TIP #9

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.

Hey, it's OK to ask for help, we are HUMANS, not machines.

During term time, the university schedule can be so tight that you can easily find yourself without a moment to rest and relax. On top of this already stressful situation, you might have the added pressure from others to meet expectations and excel, alongside experiencing anxiety around failure.

Talk to your personal tutor about it: they can help you get in contact with UCL Student Support and Wellbeing or the Student Psychological Service.

Or, if an unexpected situation goes beyond your control, and may affect your performance, claim for extenuating circumstances.

YOU ARE NOT YOUR MARK.

A mark does not describe you as a person. Instead, it reflects how far you have developed the skills required to pass the module!

TIP #10

HAVE FUN.

Make assessment an enjoyable process.

Benefit from the shared experience of learning together with your peers and enjoy the process of learning.

Everything gets easier!

Phil (BEng Electronic Engineering):

“I enjoy the fact that we always work in groups, combining our strengths and learning from our weaknesses.”



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