

Assessment and feedback

A guide for UCL students

What's the point of assessment?

How do I find out what is expected of me on my course?

In what ways might I be assessed?

Formative and summative assessment: what's the difference?

How can I practice being assessed?

What is feedback for?

What kinds of feedback will I get?

What do I do with the feedback I get?

How long does it take to get assignment feedback?

What if I need extra support?

Assessment

What's the point of assessment?

Well-designed assessment actually helps you progress through your programme. It helps your learning, as well as measuring it by focusing your attention on tasks and content that reflect the learning outcomes of the programme (see below).

Assessment helps you measure your progress. It helps you and your module tutor see what you have understood and which aspects still need some work.

How do I find out what is expected of me on my programme?

Read your Student Handbook and Moodle for each of your modules. If it's not clear, ask your tutor or module coordinator. Pay close attention to:

- **learning outcomes** – your guidelines for the knowledge, understanding and skills you are expected to develop by the end of your course
- **regulations** – attendance requirements, penalties for late submission or exceeding word count, plagiarism, absence from assessment etc
- **marking/assessment criteria** – these make clear what the assessor will be looking for in your work
- **mark/grade schemes** – what format will your mark take? Will it be a grade or a percentage? Is the marking scale limited (for example, some works might be marked out of 80)?

In what ways might I be assessed?

Your knowledge, understanding and skills can be tested – or assessed - in lots of different ways.

You are usually assessed through exams and assignments, individual pieces of work you are asked to do.

Assignments can be an essay, a lab report, an oral presentation, a video, a set of worked problems, a journal article, group work, a piece of computer code, a seminar contribution, a poster, an examination.

You'll probably experience several different types of assessment in your time at UCL.

How can I practice being assessed?

Your programme should give you plenty of opportunities to develop your approach to assessment, for example through formative assessments, practice and guided marking.

If you are given set practice exercises in class that are similar to part of the coursework or exam, take them seriously. Note the verbal feedback on the answers or solutions.

If it is appropriate for your discipline, ask for a guided marking session at the beginning of your module - this is where you practise marking a range of similar assignments and discuss feedback comments with your peers and teachers. This helps you understand assessment criteria and teacher expectations.

What's the difference between formative and summative assessment?

Formative assessment:

- an assignment or exam that doesn't count towards your final mark
- you get constructive feedback which helps you to work out your progress

It's your chance to practice assessments, so you can find out where your knowledge and understanding is solid, where you need to do more work, and what you need to do to improve your results. Try out new approaches, take some risks.

The feedback on formative assessment is really valuable, so examine it carefully and if there's anything that's not clear, ask questions – of your peers and module tutors.

Summative assessment:

- an assignment or exam that counts towards your final module mark
- the mark and comments you get are important pieces of feedback - they tell you a lot about your progress and help you to focus your efforts in future assessments

Feedback

What is feedback for?

Feedback tells you more about what you did well and what you can still do to improve. Feedback also helps you prepare for your next assessment task.

Your mark or grade is an important part of your feedback because it measures how far you've progressed. But you also need to understand how you could do even better. That's where other feedback comes in. It helps you identify your strengths as well as those areas that need more work.

Feedback should always make you feel supported and able to identify what to do next. The feedback you're given is about the piece of work, not about you personally. You are not your mark!

What kinds of feedback will I get?

From day one on your programme, you'll be getting feedback: it could be comments made in a lecture, discussions in a seminar or tutorial, feedback on practice exercises in class, answers to queries about coursework on a forum or in live Q&A sessions, conversations with other students on the module. Sometimes it's not appropriate for your teacher/tutor to give individual feedback. Instead, they might give generic feedback to the group.

There are many ways of getting feedback and you should be using all of them. **Engage with your teaching**, contribute to seminars or tutorials; **ask questions** in lectures – even if it is just to let the lecturer know that you don't understand and you'd like them to go through it again. **Ask for formative feedback** early on in each module.

Remember, your work on an assignment isn't finished once you've handed it in. The final stage is feedback and how you make use of it. Your teachers must give an indication of when you can expect to receive feedback on your work.

How long does it take to get feedback on an assignment?

You should receive feedback within one calendar month of the submission deadline of each piece of assessed work. If the one calendar month deadline cannot be met then your module coordinator must contact you directly to let you know when the feedback will be provided. The extra time should not exceed one week.

What do I do with the feedback I get?

The feedback you get may be very specific, clearly signposting your route to improvement by pointing out gaps in your knowledge or problems with the way you have applied it. It may be more general, requiring a bit more reflection. **Try discussing your feedback with other students** on your module, or with your personal tutor.

Look at the comments you receive on your assignments and think about where and how you can improve. These comments might be made in lectures or seminars, so write them down so you have them to refer back to.

Use your feedback to help you compare your work with other work that has been marked. Being able to decide for yourself how well you're doing, rather than relying on feedback from staff, is a really useful skill, which you will use again and again in your future career.

If your module is set up for it, use your MyFeedback dashboard in UCL Moodle to view all your grades and feedback for any assessed work across all your Moodle courses in one place. You can add self-reflective notes and copy and paste feedback from Turnitin into your report. The report helps you understand the variety of feedback you receive, draw comparisons between different assessments and modules, and reflect on your feedback to see how you can improve in future assessments.

If you do need more guidance, talk to your module tutor or coordinator, or your personal tutor.

Assignments

How do I prepare for an assignment?

Understand the task: look for the key words and pay attention to all the advice you're given about the assignment – it might come from your Handbook, from Moodle or during lectures. Talk to other students: sometimes explaining what you think the assignment is about to others can really help you sort out your own ideas.

Understand the marking/assessment criteria that your work will be judged against. Your tutors must make sure you are aware of those criteria and the marking scales in advance. If they don't, raise it with them directly or with your personal tutor or programme administrator.

Find out when and where your written exam, presentation, lab test or other assessment will take place. For exams, make sure you know how to get there, leave plenty of time, and make sure you bring along a note of your student identifier (available from Portico).

If your assignment includes **collaborative or group work**, ask your tutors how the contribution of each individual will be assessed.

Plan your work and think about how to organise and structure your answer. Whether it's an essay, a lab report, a presentation or a proof, the way you present the information affects how well the assessor can follow your line of thought.

Self-assess before you hand in your work. Think about the criteria for the assessment – how far do you think you have met them? Where have you done well and what not so well and how do you know?

Check you're meeting the requirements like word count, format, submission deadline, here and how to submit. There will be instructions about including footnotes, diagrams, images, tables, figures, bibliographies and so on. **Before** you start the piece of work, check the requirements. **Before** you hand in the work, check again!

What if I need extra support?

Reasonable adjustments

If you have a disability or other ongoing medical or mental health condition that might affect your assessments, ask for support from [Student Disability Services](#) (SDS). Ideally, you should notify UCL of any such condition when you enrol so that the university can put in place the support that you need. See the [Student Guide to Applying for Reasonable Adjustments](#).

Extenuating circumstances

You must notify UCL of any circumstances which are sudden, unexpected, significantly disruptive and beyond your control that could affect your assessments, such as a serious illness or the death of a close relative. UCL will make sure that alternative arrangements are put in place for you in these cases, such as an extension or deferral of assessment to a later date. See the [Student Guide to Applying for Extenuating Circumstances](#).

Further resources

Student Guide to the UCL Academic Manual: [Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes](#)

[Personal Tutoring](#)

[Student Support and Wellbeing](#)

Current Students webpages: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/students/>