



GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

This document was developed by the Faculty of Education and with permission adapted for UJ.¹

This document should be read in conjunction with Faculty/College specific guidelines and rules on assessment.

The purpose of this document is to:

- promote an understanding of the underlying principles of continuous assessment;
- provide a framework to help inform Faculty/College decision-making with regard to implementation of continuous assessment in **undergraduate** programmes.

A. WHAT IS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT?

1. Continuous assessment is a form of assessment that assesses students' ongoing progress with respect to the attainment of outcomes/objectives in a module. Continuous assessment is an alternative to the traditional assessment model that operates in many university contexts (i.e. assessment tasks contribute to a semester/ year mark and then students take a final end-of-semester or end-of-year examination). It can be used instead of traditional models of assessment while maintaining academic rigour.
2. The rationale for continuous assessment is to ensure that students work consistently. This provides early indicators of their performance, with built-in measures of **feedback and support** for students to master particular areas of a set module.
3. It fosters critical awareness and reflection by students enabling them to take responsibility for their learning and monitor their own progress.
4. A continuous assessment approach/ model makes use of both formative assessment and summative assessment² tasks.
 - 4.1 Formative assessment uses student learning data to provide feedback to the students and lecturer in the teaching and learning process (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009). Formative assessment provides regular progress updates for students through lecturer feedback. These tasks serve to **scaffold** student learning. Scaffolding means that each task builds on preceding tasks/learning to enhance understanding and to integrate learning. Formative assessment enables staff and students to identify and close learning gaps. This is known as **assessment for learning**.
 - 4.2 Summative assessment uses student learning data to determine academic progress at the **end** of a specified period. Its purpose is to assess the learning that has occurred in order to grade, certify or record progress (Dunn & Mulvenon, 2009; Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2002). Summative assessments determine whether students have met **performance requirements** on aspects of a module in a specific study period (e.g. 14 or 28 weeks). These are deemed to have been **met** (if the mark for a summative assessment is 50% plus), or **not** (if the final mark for a summative assessment is 49% or less). This is

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² All assessment, whether formative or summative, is designed to improve learning. However, formative assessment is primarily diagnostic, while summative is an evaluation of the sum of students' learning.

also known as **assessment of learning**. Lecturers allocate a mark for every summative assessment task and communicate these to students.

5. As a matter of principle, there should be a purposeful number, mix and spread of appropriately-weighted assessment opportunities that adequately and progressively cover module outcomes in a way that meaningfully assesses the performance and progress of each individual student. The number of actual assessments that is most appropriate will vary in accordance with the nature of the module. For many typical semester modules, there would be a minimum of three summative assessment opportunities (with a maximum of five); and for a year module, a minimum of five summative assessment opportunities (with a maximum of seven). However, certain types modules require more frequent testing (e.g. those that require weekly class tests on theory and practice, and/or practical reports).
6. A continuous assessment approach in a module takes the following into consideration:
 - 6.1 Various sections of the module have associated assessment opportunities. These can be formative, where the focus is on **assessment for learning**, or they can be summative, where the focus is on **assessment of learning**.
 - 6.2 Formative assessment opportunities, with comprehensive feedback for improvement, can be used to assist students in completing summative assessment tasks.
 - 6.3 Each section of a module covered by summative assessment is regarded as complete and is not reassessed. The exception is in the case of an **integrated assessment** that requires students to demonstrate knowledge integration and application across a module.
 - 6.3 Summative assessments are carefully weighted.
 - 6.3.1 Weighting means that some summative assessments count more than others in contributing to the overall mark of the module. Weighting takes into consideration **the time of the year at which the assessment is conducted** (e.g. at the beginning of the year, a shorter assessment with a lower weighting); the **importance of the knowledge or skills** being assessed (e.g. if the outcomes are particularly critical, then the particular assessment may carry a higher weighting); and/or the **complexity of the task** (e.g. an assessment that integrates various sections in a comprehensive task may have a higher weighting).
 - 6.3.2 Continuous assessment usually includes a heavily weighted final summative assessment/s. This can take place at the end of the semester/year. The formal examination timetable period can be used for scheduling such an assessment opportunity.
 - 6.3.3 In continuous assessment, there are still opportunities for students to rework and resubmit a task, with the student using feedback for improvement, and prior to the calculation of the final mark (see 7. below). The resubmission opportunity will however **normally** be for only the **most heavily weighted summative assessment/s** (usually one for a semester module and two for a year module³). In respect of students who, for whatever reason, miss one or more summative assessment opportunities, the Faculty/College will make determinations within the parameters of its own rules and the principles of
 - fairness to students;
 - the integrity of the subject matter and the qualification.
 - 6.3.4 The **final module mark is the overall percentage calculated when students have completed all of the weighted summative assessment tasks**.
7. There are **no additional opportunities for reworking and resubmission of any of the summative tasks after the final module mark is calculated**.
 - 7.1 If students have used one resubmission opportunity for the most heavily weighted summative assessment task, and the final overall percentage attained is 49% or less, students **do not qualify** for another summative assessment that covers all the work in the module. Unless a faculty/college has a particular rationale or justification, such students will have failed the module and will need to repeat.
 - 7.2 A general exception to the above rule is stated in the UJ's Regulation A: if the module is at exit level **and** if it is the last module outstanding for a student to be awarded the qualification. In these cases, an additional assessment opportunity may be granted at the discretion of the Executive Dean (who

³ This does not preclude a lecturer from using their professional judgement in determining if students should be granted opportunities for reworking and resubmitting another summative assessment task, particularly if a large percentage of students have not met critical learning outcomes.

may delegate the duty to the Vice Dean: Teaching and Learning), in consultation with the HOD and IPET manager after the global marks of the student have been finalised.

8. Lecturers are required to keep meticulous records of summative assessment marks as well as formative feedback provided to students, especially with respect to resubmissions (e.g. for the most heavily weighted summative assessment task/s). Mark lists should be updated regularly, and students kept abreast of their progress (or lack thereof). Communication is conducted via Blackboard.
9. Lecturers must make penalties for late submission in each module clear to students.

B. AN EXAMPLE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT TASKS AND WEIGHTINGS IN A SEMESTER MODULE

As noted under point 5 above, guidelines in respect of scope, timing and weighting apply to the most typical modules. Exceptions to line items in the following table could include module types that, for example, carry practical components requiring more frequent tests and assessments.

Assessment tasks	Formative/ Summative	Scope and timing of assessment	Weighting	Notes
1	<i>Formative</i>	Small scope, first two to three weeks		Gives students an opportunity to get accustomed to the continuous assessment approach, and for lecturers to compile a list of possible 'at risk' students for follow up and support. Feedback provided to students for improvement.
2	Summative	Small scope	10%	Could, for instance, build on feedback from task 1.
3	Summative	Small scope	15%	Could assess discrete, intact knowledge or skills.
4	<i>Formative</i>	Medium scope		Task with feedback provided to students (e.g. improvements to a first draft in preparation for task 6 below).
5	Summative	Medium scope	30%	Could include demonstration of integrated set of skills/ oral presentations/ artefact.
6	Summative	Larger scope, more comprehensive integrated assessment	45%	If the student fails the assessment (40 ⁴ % - 49%), they get an opportunity for reworking and resubmission. The mark for resubmission eligibility is capped at 50%. The lecturer stipulates a timeframe in which this assessment is conducted ⁵ . An opportunity not used in this period is forfeited (unless there are compelling other reasons such as illness, etc). <i>A special assessment opportunity is created for such students. The mark for the special assessment is also capped at 50%.</i>

Any, and all, of the above assessments could be blended, i.e. they may include oral exams, written papers, practical tests and/or assignments. Moderators are expected to engage with the more heavily weighted

⁴ Subminimum of 40% is required to qualify. Not all students who fail get opportunity for supplementary opportunity (e.g. students with a mark 0-39% retain their original fail mark).

⁵ Lecturers will be required to keep records of students who qualify and the details of communications via Blackboard.

⁶ Consideration must be given to the timelines for the completion of marks and the finalisation of student global marks if a resubmission of the most heavily weighted assessment is during the examination period.

assessment/s – moderation thus does not wait until the end of the semester/ year. Normal moderation processes apply, and the moderator forms are completed and submitted to the Faculty’s examinations officer.

C. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AND TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT MODELS

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT MODEL	CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT MODEL
Normally has a final ‘high stakes’ assessment opportunity (exam) <u>at the end</u> of a learning cycle.	There may be one or more heavily weighted final summative assessment/s <u>within</u> the learning cycle, usually towards the end of the module.
Includes a number of assessment opportunities (e.g. class tests, assignments) that lead to the calculation of a semester/ year mark. A subminimum (usually 40%) determines if a student gets access to the final summative assessment (an examination) at the end of the semester/ year.	Normally includes a number of assessments, both formative and summative. Formative assessment with detailed feedback for improvement is vital. All summative assessments with particular weightings cumulatively add up to a final period mark.
Students attaining 49% and below in the final examination get access to a supplementary examination. Marks are then capped at 50%.	Subminimum (usually 40%) required for a reworking and resubmission opportunity) <u>for most heavily weighted summative assessment task</u> . The resubmission mark is capped at 50%.
An end-of-semester or end-of-year examination can count between 40% and 60% of the final mark and assessment will usually aim for broad coverage of the entire curriculum (whole semester or year content).	Sections of work where students are assessed in summative tasks and deemed competent are concluded and set aside. The exception is when summative assessment tasks require integration and/or application of knowledge from other sections or modules.
Students will <u>pass the module</u> , if the final period mark is 50% plus, or <u>fail the module</u> , if the final period mark is 49% or less. For students in the mark range of 40-49%, a second assessment opportunity (supplementary assessment) is provided. The supplementary is conventionally very similar to the final exam in terms of its length, complexity and coverage of the module.	Students will pass the module (and be deemed competent), if the final period mark is 50% plus, or fail the module (and be deemed not yet competent), if the final period mark is 49% or less. There is no additional supplementary opportunity once marks have been finalised (except in the conditions stated in 6.2). <i>Students will already have had an opportunity to rework and resubmit the most heavily weighted summative assessment during the module.</i>