

# A3.2 Being inclusive in designing assessments

## Plan an assessment strategy

Consider the course learning outcomes and graduate attributes that you want students to achieve and the types of assessments the course might use. Plan how this is spread across modules and through the levels of a course. Discuss within the course team how you will implement assessment for learning and be aware of the principles of effective assessment and feedback.

When designing assessments and considering alternative assessment methods, make use of the [University Assessment Policy](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/AssessmentPolicy.pdf) The University has also produced guidance on the [policy and procedures for inclusive assessment, reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment arrangements](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/InclusiveAssessmentPolicy.pdf).

## Include variety of assessment types across a course

### How?

Try to ensure there is a balance of different assessment methods throughout the course, taking into account progression and course learning outcomes. Where assessment formats may be unfamiliar to some students, consider providing a model example response where this is appropriate.

### Why?

Different types of assessment will suit some students better than others and a balanced approach ensures that the widest possible range of students is catered for. For example, students who are weaker at traditional essay style assessments may excel in other forms of assessment, e.g., presentation-based assessments.

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## Consider how technology is used in assessment

### How?

Consider how digital assessment is used within your course and how adaptations are made for particular needs. Jisc’s ‘[Making assessments accessible](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/making-assessments-accessible)’ considers design of assessments while its ‘[Rethinking assessment](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/rethinking-assessment)’ report provides a summary of how digital assessment is used at various higher education institutions. Further information on developments in automated assessment can be found in Jisc’s ‘[The future of assessment’](https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/7733/1/the-future-of-assessment-report.pdf) report.

### Why?

The pandemic prompted universities to reimagine assessment and the role played by technology. Digital assessment can be helpful in removing some barriers for disabled students as well as easing anxiety for those with mental health conditions. However, it is important to be aware of how students might be disadvantaged by the use of digital assessment, such as lack of access to devices away from campus or where assessment platforms do not allow the use of assistive technology.



## Consider barriers in assessment design and offer a choice of assessment options

### How?

Plan a range of assessment methods for students to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been met. Try to ensure that the method of assessment does not put any students at a disadvantage. For example, presentations could be delivered to the tutor, rather than the wider group, or completed as a written assignment.

### Why?

The design of an assessment may create barriers for some students and the skills required to carry out a certain type of assessment may not be related to the learning outcomes. Allowing all students a choice of assessment formats to suit their individual strengths will help them to demonstrate their learning effectively and will reduce the need to design alternative assessments as a one-off adjustment.

## Include extra time in in-class tests

### How?

Incorporate the needs of students who have 25% extra time (the standard recommendation for most dyslexic students) by shortening the test, e.g., from one hour to 40 minutes so that those with extra time can still finish within the allotted session time.

### Why?

By assuming there are likely to be students who need extra time in the group, it is less likely that you will need to make time-consuming ad hoc arrangements.

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## Be explicit about requirements for written English

### How?

Let students know in advance whether their technical accuracy in written expression is a specific learning outcome and will therefore be assessed.

### Why?

Students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) and those with English as an additional language will be at a disadvantage where this is the case. You may need to signpost these students to additional support in order to achieve the learning outcomes.

## Provide detailed assessment criteria

### How?

Be explicit about the requirements and the levels of detail, knowledge and skill that are necessary for a high grade. Discuss assessment criteria with students at the beginning of the module and explain the meaning of the criteria. Where possible, record this so all students receive the same information.

### Why?

Students will find it difficult to use feedback on their work constructively if they can’t understand why some areas of the work are weaker than others. The terms used in assessment criteria are not always self-explanatory to students. Feedback indicates this is a key source of anxiety and dissatisfaction for students.

# Useful links and resources

[Assessment and feedback in a post-pandemic era: A time for learning and inclusion](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessment-and-feedback-post-pandemic-era-time-learning-and-inclusion), Advance HE, 2021

[Assessment collaborative enhancement projects](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/assessment), QAA

[Hallmarks of Success: assessment in digital and blended pedagogy](https://www.membershipresources.qaa.ac.uk/teaching-learning-and-assessment/assessment), QAA, 2022

[Making assessments accessible](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/making-assessments-accessible), Jisc, 2017

[Making the language of assessment inclusive](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/making-the-language-of-assessment-inclusive), QAA, 2022

[Rethinking assessment](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/rethinking-assessment), Jisc 2021

[The future of assessment](https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/7733/1/the-future-of-assessment-report.pdf), Jisc, 2020

[University of Worcester Assessment Policy](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/AssessmentPolicy.pdf)

[University of Worcester Policy and Procedures on Inclusive Assessment](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/InclusiveAssessmentPolicy.pdf)

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