

RESPONSE TO STUDENT CONSULTATION ON ASSESSMENT TYPES

SUMMARY

This is a response to the consultation on assessment types which took place between 11 and 21 March on the [Arts and Humanities Board of Studies Student Consultative Forum – March 2022](#).

The consultation was open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students currently studying Arts and Humanities modules and qualifications. In total 260 people registered for the consultation, with 314 posts made by students.

The purpose of the consultation was to explore students' attitudes towards and experiences of different kinds of assessment. The Board of Studies were keen to hear about the types of assessment students had undertaken so far, which have been enjoyed, which were challenging, and whether assessment might relate to activities people undertake outside of their studies.

The forum sought views using three questions:

- How varied should assessment be?
- How do you find different types of assessment?
- Should assessment be more authentic?

Below is a list of some of the major issues raised by students contributing to the consultation, and the steps being taken by the school to address them:

- Conventional essays and exercises in close analysis are still highly valued by students
 - We are committed to maintaining the centrality of these assessment types in our Arts and Humanities curriculum.
- Closed book exams are unpopular
 - Several modules are already planning to move from exams to EMAs, and we will review those exam modules that remain to assess whether a similar change is appropriate for them.
- Students generally welcome tasks involving skills that can be applied beyond their studies, but don't think they should be compulsory
 - We will use new modules launching over the next two years to try offering more innovative assessment types alongside more traditional forms.
- There are concerns about the accessibility of unconventional assessment types
 - Any new forms of assessment will be fully accessible to students with additional needs, with alternative assessment offered where needed to ensure that.
- Forum activities need to be better integrated into assessment tasks – not just a device to compel forum participation
 - We will continue to refine and improve the ways in which assessed forum activities are used in Arts and Humanities curriculum.
- Assessment tasks should build on each other so that skills are developed across a module and even a qualification
 - We will ensure that staff responsible for designing assessment are cognisant of this point, including discussion at a school-wide workshop in summer 2022.

The forum was moderated by Bev Smit (Arts and Humanities Board of Studies student representative), Clare Spencer (Deputy Director of Teaching, Arts & Humanities), James Hutchinson (Associate Lecturer) and Richard Marsden (Director of Teaching, Arts & Humanities). The moderators provided a summary of the discussion and made recommendations for future actions which were agreed at the Board of Studies meeting on 4 May 2022.

FULL RESPONSE

	You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
1	You value essays as a form of assessment in the Arts and Humanities and would not want to see them reduced or removed.	Essays will remain a staple of assessment in Arts and Humanities for the foreseeable future. There are no plans to change that approach.	
2	Many of you find exams both challenging and relatively unhelpful in terms of cementing your learning.	We are in the process of changing the final assessment on several modules from exams to EMAs. Exams will remain only on a small minority of modules.	We will review remaining modules with exams to confirm that they are indeed the best method for assessing the knowledge and skills taught.
3	You welcome assessment that offers a balance between close analysis and more thematic tasks.	This is already a staple approach on many of our modules, and we will ensure that it remains so.	
4	Some of you are interested in taking a greater variety of assessment types, particularly if they offer the chance to develop skills that can be applied beyond your studies.	We already have some modules that offer, for example, the chance to plan exhibitions, give presentations, and write in particular genres.	We will continue to highlight the potential benefits of diverse assessment to staff, particularly those responsible for planning assessment on modules and qualifications. We will also share this document, detailing the outcomes and responses of the consultation, with all academic staff in the school.
5	Different types of assessment may be more appropriate for some subjects than others. You would not want to see a 'one size fits all' approach.	Responsibility for designing assessment will remain in the hands of subject experts, and we fully recognise that what works in one subject may not be effective or relevant to another.	We are holding a dedicated workshop on diversifying assessment for Arts and Humanities academics in May 2022. This will enable us to get input from subject experts on what is appropriate for different disciplines.
6	A greater range of assessment types could be beneficial to your learning, but there are concerns that too many different types in a single module could make it harder to develop skills across assignments.	This is a really important point which will inform assessment design on our modules and qualifications. Offering different assessment types as options alongside more traditional essays is one way to address this, and we are trialling that on several modules which will launch soon.	We will evaluate this approach on some new modules launching in 2023 and 2024; these include A350 <i>Greek and Roman Myth</i> , A336 <i>Art and its Critical Histories</i> , and A328 <i>Empires: Power, Resistance, Legacies</i> .
7	Different assessment types can be challenging for some students in relation to issues such as mental health, digital literacy, caring responsibilities, etc.	We will ensure that any modules which feature more unusual forms of assessment also provide alternatives that are accessible to all.	

8	Interactive Computer-Marked Assessments (iCMAs) can be a useful way to check your own understanding of a topic.	We already use iCMAs on some modules and will investigate the possibility of introducing them more widely, where appropriate.	We will undertake an audit of our curriculum to help us better understand the kinds of skills and knowledge that might best be consolidated by iCMAs.
9	You value assignments that allow you to develop draft work with help from other students, getting feedback from them and in turn learning by engaging with work they have produced.	This approach is currently in use on some modules, particularly but not exclusively in Creative Writing. We will explore how to encourage its use more widely.	
10	Assessed forum activities can be a useful opportunity to take a dry run at a topic or skills and to learn from other students, but they can also sometimes feel tokenistic and do not always generate genuine discussion or insight.	We will continue to refine and improve the models and tasks used for assessed forum posts on modules that feature that form of assessment.	
11	Some of you expressed an interest in building up a portfolio evidencing your achievements over the course of your qualification.	We provide a personal development (PDP) tool called <i>FutureYOU</i> which guides you in considering how the modules you are studying, including the assessments, are building up knowledge and skills over the course of your studies and advice on setting up an e-portfolio. <i>FutureYOU</i> is available via your Study Home website.	Not all of our modules and qualifications are part of <i>FutureYOU</i> yet. We are committed to including all our curriculum by summer 2025. Even if your modules aren't yet part of <i>FutureYOU</i> , there are many resources there which can help you to articulate your academic and personal development for further study, careers or volunteering.

Date: May 2022