

Keele Assessment Principles

The **10 Keele Assessment Principles** set out below should steer assessment practice and procedures in all areas of the University and at all levels of study. They represent evidence-based, sector good practice. It is for programme teams and subject areas to determine, in discussion with their students and other stakeholders where appropriate, how the Principles may be translated and applied to local practice.

They will also be used in programme development, approval and review, in tandem with the [‘Authentic Assessment’ guidance](#) and resources within Keele University’s [Curriculum Design Framework](#). Schools are encouraged to discuss the principles with their external examiners to receive feedback on how successfully the School’s programmes reflect the principles. The formal rules applying to assessment at Keele are set out in [Regulation D1: Assessment](#).

1. Assessment should be designed at Programme level

Assessment design should begin at programme level to achieve a balance between alternative modes of assessment, and to ensure that all programme learning outcomes are being assessed. Each programme should contain opportunities for students to deliver assessment outputs that are aimed at diverse audiences, for example employers and external organisations. A variety of assessment types should be seen as desirable to ensure inclusivity, fairness, and motivation, but unless this is coordinated at programme level there is a danger that the overall pattern of assessment will become unbalanced or confused.

Programme level assessment design allows you to protect against over-assessment that might burden students and staff. The balance of assessment will be explored as part of programme design, validation, and review.

2. Assessment should be an integral part of the curriculum

The design of assessment should not be separated from the design of the overall curriculum: programme aims, learning outcomes, skills outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment activities, as described within programme specifications. Assessment strategies for individual modules should not be decided in isolation from other modules or levels of study. Assessment should be an integral part of the students’ experience of learning.

Students’ approaches to learning should both influence and inform assessment practices. Assessment methods should be chosen so that they encourage a critical approach to learning aimed at improving outcomes and allowing students to develop a reflective and strategic approach to their future learning. Whilst assessment will in part be designed to assess performance and knowledge in relation to past learning, it should also feed forward to future learning, development, and assessments.

3. The purpose of assessment should be clearly communicated to students

Assessment carries a variety of purposes: e.g., to monitor learning, to assess competence, to provide a context for future learning, and to provide feedback to staff and students. In deciding on the methods and timing of assessment for a module, it is necessary to clarify the purpose(s) for which the assessment is required and consider the extent to which the method of assessment is fit for such purpose(s). Students should be prepared for the assessment tasks they face and should be given the opportunity to develop competency in different assessment types.

4. Assessment should aim to be authentic: linked to disciplinary practice, to programme learning outcomes, and to contexts of application and employment where appropriate

To be authentic, programme assessment design should ensure that it assesses the stated learning outcomes, develops students in their academic practice, and links to contexts of application and employment where relevant. At programme level, authentic assessment design should be diverse enough to encompass the applied and vocational elements of study, to engage learners in different ways, and to allow students to produce a range of digital outputs. Programme designers and leaders should ensure that students encounter multiple assessments that foreshadow employment activity and outputs, allowing assessment to be authentic to graduate futures.

5. Assessment should be reliable, robust and fair

In assessment, consistent standards of tutor assessment and fairness are important goals to aim for. Both are more likely to be achieved if clear task guidance, explicit assessment criteria and marking schemes are given to staff and students alike. To avoid conscious or unconscious bias and to increase students' trust in the fairness of the process, marking should be carried out anonymously unless this is not practicable. To increase marker reliability and fairness, it is important to apply a robust moderation process¹. In the assessment design process, every effort should be made to reduce or remove opportunities for academic misconduct.

Where a module entails multiple learning outcomes, it may be necessary to design different assessment tasks to ensure that all outcomes are appropriately assessed at least once. For Level 3 and 4 students, consideration should be given to assessing learning outcomes more than once within a level of study to give students practice in demonstrating their ability.

6. Students should receive meaningful and timely feedback

Assessment tasks should be designed to provide meaningful feedback to students in a timely manner to help them understand their mark and how they can improve by way of 'feed-forward'. Wherever possible, an indicative date for delivering grades and feedback should be

¹ Keele's Marking and Moderation Policy can be found [here](#)

published to students before they undertake their assessment. Whilst summative feedback has an important function, an over-reliance on summative assessment at the close of a module or unit can offer limited opportunity for learning development, therefore structures of formative feedback should always be considered.

7. Criteria for assessment should be transparent

Assessment criteria should be clear to tutors, examiners and students to ensure equity, validity and reliability. The Keele University Generic Assessment Criteria should be used to inform marking and where appropriate be adapted locally to the School or subject and to the type of assessment. Such assessment criteria should be shared with, and explained to, all students, markers and examiners, including external examiners.

8. Assessment should be redeemable

Students must be given the opportunity to retrieve a failed assessment. The form of the repeat assessment may differ from the original assessment where the original assessment cannot easily be repeated. On occasion it may also be appropriate to replace multiple elements of the original assessment with a single form of assessment where this allows the student to demonstrate the required learning outcomes.

9. Assessment should be inclusive

Assessment tasks (including for repeat assessments) should be developed with an awareness of diverse student learning needs and approaches. A variety of assessment methods should be used to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by over-concentration on narrow assessment activities. Staff should consider suitable adjustments to assessment methods that may need to be employed for students with disabilities. Assessment tasks and criteria should be clear enough for students for whom English is not their first language. Where possible, a balance of different modes of assessment should be utilised in the core and compulsory modules that make up a programme.

Assessment conventions should be reviewed periodically to ascertain whether they are inclusive to diverse student cohorts. High stakes, timed assessments (in situ or online) should be reviewed to determine whether they are authentic to learning and skills objectives, and a fair reflection of learning activities in the module and programme.

10. Assessment should be manageable and efficient for students and staff

In designing curriculum, staff need to ensure they are making sufficient and appropriate demands so that students can demonstrate their highest levels of attainment. This needs to be reflected in student assessment and workload patterns. Programme teams should spread assessment throughout the semester / year to minimise the bunching of coursework deadlines and examinations. Tight clusters of high-stakes, timed assessments can have negative effects on student wellbeing and performance and may set a context for high levels

of extenuating circumstances and extension applications, so should be avoided where possible.

Programme designers should avoid over-assessment and the iteration of the same form of assessment beyond clear developmental objectives. These measures will also help avoid a negative impact on staff workload. Assessment should be efficient and take advantage of digital workflows of design, submission, feedback, and storage wherever possible.

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