



Guidance on ensuring consistency for students by aligning module credit weighting and summative assessment load.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Code of Practice (CoP) on Taught Programme and Module Assessment and Feedback was updated in 2017/18 and the revisions approved by UEC, UEB and Senate. The aim of the revisions was to address a number of persistent student concerns about our assessment practices, including lack of consistency in summative assessment load (including coursework and examinations).
- 1.2 We have a responsibility to ensure that summative assessment loads are broadly comparable across modules that have the same credit weighting. This guidance was developed alongside the revisions to the CoP and based on an analysis of assessment practices across the sector. The guidance applies to UG and PGT modules.
- 1.3 The guidance has been updated further to reflect the University's Framework for Educational Resilience 2020/21.
- 1.4 Please note:
 - The guidance refers **only** to compulsory summative assessment. Formative assessment practices remain outside the tariff.
 - With the exception of the restrictions on assessment by examination (see 2.1, below), the tariffs are indicative only and should not be interpreted as a prescriptive approach towards determining assessment methods; indeed, it is important that students experience a wide variety of assessment types in order to prepare them for life beyond university.
 - It is not expected that each module will have an identical assessment load; instead, the aim is to ensure that we are able to demonstrate broad comparability.

2. The University of Birmingham Assessment Tariff

- 2.1 As set out in the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment and Feedback, traditional closed-book examinations taking place at the end of a module should be kept to a minimum and used only where the module content cannot be assessed in any other way. If this type of examination is deemed necessary, the examination should contribute no more than 50% to the overall module mark. An inclusive online alternative assessment should also be developed in case of disruption at short notice. This is important to ensure resilience of assessment in accordance with the Framework for Educational Resilience 2020/21. Note that some PSRB specifications may require final examinations to contribute >50% to the overall module mark; in this instance an exemption will need to be requested.
- 2.2 **20 credit modules:** The recommended assessment tariff is a load that equates broadly to coursework of 4-5,000 words (or numerical subject equivalent). Examples of different ways in which that total load could be accumulated include:
 - 2,000 words coursework **plus** a two hour exam



- **any combination** of coursework and exams to make up the total maximum assessment load, so long as the exam does not contribute >50% of the module mark.

2.3 **10 credit modules** (where used): Notwithstanding 1.4, above, the summative assessment load should be equivalent to half that of 20 credit modules. The following are examples of the total maximum load:

- coursework of 2000-2500 words (or numerical discipline equivalent) **or any combination** of coursework and exams to make up the total maximum assessment load, so long as the exam does not contribute >50% of the module mark.

It is important to emphasise that we encourage innovation and variety in the forms of assessment that are encompassed under the broad headings of 'exam' and 'coursework' and also noting the restrictions on traditional examinations set out in 2.1.

2.4 **A 40 credit dissertation/project module** will normally be assessed by a thesis of 8-10,000 words or equivalent; for example, it is recognised that some numerical subjects have different thesis length requirements and some dissertation modules have several assessment components rather than one long thesis. A 60 credit thesis at Master's level will range from 16-20,000 words (or numerical subject equivalent) reflecting the more substantial nature of the work, the increased academic demand at MSc level and the substantial weighting of the dissertation within the award.