

ASSESSMENT PLANS:

NOW is a great time to review them!

THE ASSESSMENT MATRIX

An assessment matrix – whether incorporated as part of a scope and sequence or a separate document – is the high-level plan for course assessment. The matrix allows checking of issues such as:

- coverage of all the course's criteria, and their standard elements
- coverage of all Work Requirements (if noted in the course)
- the balance between the relative weighting of individual tasks to the final internal rating of each relevant criteria (for example, the number of major tasks to be set over the course, when they will be undertaken and the criteria they relate to, and the use of minor tasks to assess skills and knowledge needed for the successful completion of major tasks).



FOCUS OF REVIEW

Now is an excellent time to review your assessment matrix: the best-laid plans can - and do - change!

Three key principles of criterion-based assessment can be used to focus a review:

1. *Frequency: 'Does the plan give learners adequate opportunities to demonstrate improvement / consistency of achievement?'*

The less often a criterion is assessed, the less opportunities students have to demonstrate improvement and/or consistency of achievement. While TASC does not mandate a minimum number of times a criterion / standard element must be assessed, there needs to be a just, fair, and reasonable balance between assessment opportunities and work-load pressures (for both students and teachers) associated with over-assessment. A single assessment does not provide the necessary opportunities, but 10 assessments might well be unnecessary and unreasonable.

2. *Balance: 'Does the plan unreasonably privilege some criteria over others?'*

From an internal assessment perspective, all criteria within a course are of equal significance and 'weight'. Therefore, there should be a reasonable balance between the number of occasions each criterion is assessed. While some generic criteria (for example a criterion focused on communication) might be able to be assessed in all tasks this does not mean that it should or must be. Assessing a communications-focused criterion 12 times, but a specific knowledge-focused criterion only twice is not a reasonable balance of assessment.

3. Timing: ‘Does the plan allow for measurement of achievement at the endpoint in learning?’

Many courses have criteria that relate to specific topics or areas of course content. For example, a certain area of knowledge delivered to learners in Unit 2 or Module 1 might be linked to a specific criterion. The question can then arise, ‘When is the endpoint in learning for that criterion: the end of the Unit/Module, or the end of the course?’ While the focus of teaching and learning may have moved to new knowledge areas or skills, it is important to recognise that the on-going learning in a course typically deepens and enriches students’ understanding of previously studied topics and skills. It is therefore necessary to consider providing opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement not only at the end of a specific content topic/area, but also later in the course.

‘WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I IDENTIFY AN ISSUE IN MY MATRIX?’

Example Issue:	Actions to Consider:
Insufficient opportunities for demonstration of improvement / consistency of achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can additional assessment opportunities be given to address this criterion? • Can planned assessment tasks be modified or adapted to include assessment of this criterion?
Lack of reasonable balance between assessment of individual criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can planned assessments of an ‘over-assessed’ criterion be removed without adverse impact on the validity of its assessment (e.g., removal of planned minor assessments of that criterion)? • Can additional assessments of an ‘under-assessed’ criterion be added? Might these be done within the context of already planned tasks?
Lack of opportunities to demonstrate achievement at endpoint in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can additional assessment opportunities be given later in the course (e.g., revision tests)? • Can later assessment tasks be modified or adapted to include assessment of topics or skills covered earlier in the course?

INDIVIDUAL RE-ASSESSMENT vs ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASSESSMENT

The issues noted in this discussion are focused on whole-of-class assessment. Closer to the end of the academic year the issue of providing assessment opportunities for individuals with low or borderline outcomes in specific criteria will become an additional focus. When planning for such opportunities, it

is important to consider whether the tasks will be new to the learner, or a repetition of past tasks. In the latter case very careful consideration is needed to maintain the integrity of any assessment outcomes and ensure that the student has not gained an inappropriate advantage, for example, by access to corrected work, answer sheets, or the work of peers.

