Designing assessment is a significant component of your designing and planning for your course. It is an integral part of planning for learning and curriculum design. This is because assessment is not only something that is a product of a course; rather, it is interwoven into the fabric of the learning during the course.

Complex learning nurtures assessment that builds meaningful connections between learning and the development of the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes that are intended for a course and ultimately the program.

Assessment design isn’t something you think about at the end of the course: it takes place at the beginning with the planning of the course curriculum and learning experiences, and is a reiterative process that has three key phases:

**Phase 1: Planning and thinking about assessment**

This is a critical and creative phase in the assessment design cycle. This phase involves determining your intended learning outcomes and how they might best be assessed. You will also need to ascertain the purposes of assessment and how you will prepare your students to meet the assessment requirements.

This will require you to understand or know your students, for example:

- What are their learning needs and strengths?
- What motivates their learning and working towards their assessment?
- What hinders their learning and efforts towards assessment?
- How aware are your learners of their learning styles, behaviours, approaches?
- How diverse are your learners and how can you meet their learning needs through thoughtful assessment design?
- How do your learners’ prior knowledge, skills and experience influence your assessment design?
- How do your students’ expectations influence your assessment design?
**Phase 2: Monitoring during your course delivery**

This phase is the opportunity to provide feedback to students on their learning and assessment as well as receive feedback from students about how they are interpreting your course’s assessment. This two-way monitoring provides you with the opportunity to fine-tune your course curriculum program and, if necessary, provide additional resources to students to assist student understanding of how they can successfully complete the assessment task/s.

**Phase 3: Review and reflection**

This phase involves critical reflection of the effectiveness of

- the processes you delivered to support students with the assessment task/s
- the assessment task to measure student learning.

It asks you to analyse your teaching practice and identify strengths and areas for improvement in the future. Some of your learning/findings will be generalisable to course design while others will be more specific and particular to the student cohort and/or the discipline knowledge and skills context that was associated with the course.

The review phase also provides you with the opportunity to evaluate the course curriculum, the role that the assessment strategies played and how the students reacted to the challenges as well as the quality of their learning outputs/outcomes. This type of reflection leads to development of standards or expectations you have of your learners.

Your Course Experience Survey (CES) data will assist your review, reflection and evaluation. This data set provides the student perspectives of their learning experience in your course. You can supplement student perceptions with your own reflections of your teaching and, if you’re in a teaching team, the team’s perspectives of how effective the assessment and learning had been. Such an approach should provide useful insights and recommendations for consideration with the next implementation of the course. Therefore it’s useful to record the analysis and discussion in a brief report.

**A tool for thinking about assessment design**

The tables below provide a framework of questions to enable you to think about assessment design. The framework is an organic tool in that it encourages you to think about your academic work in curriculum development.

The tool is not exhaustive yet it is indicative of critical areas for planning, designing, monitoring and reflecting on assessment, its design and implementation.

I hope you find the tool helpful for your own teaching practice and may it stimulate conversations with your colleagues in your program on matters of learning and assessment.
### Planning and thinking about assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Sample questions to guide your assessment design</th>
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| **Initial thinking** | • What are the purposes of your assessment?  
  • Think about what you want your students to learn.  
  • What's the role of learning in your assessment task?  
  • What do you want the students to learn? Knowledge? Process/skills? Attitudes/values? |
| **Knowing your students as learners** | • What assumptions have you made about your learners and their skill levels to complete the assessment tasks? What is your evidence for these assumptions you've made?  
  • How does knowing your students shape your assessment design?  
  • How will you facilitate/develop skills for the learning process to assist students to work on their assessment tasks? |
| **Thinking about assessing student performance** | • What learning can be made from assessing performance?  
  • How does this shape the learning experience?  
  • How do you prepare your students to assess: self/peer?  
  • How do you facilitate successful peer learning?  
  • Have you planned a role for formative assessment in your curriculum? |
| **Constructive alignment** | • Can you show how the learning goals (intended learning), activities (learning experience) and outcomes (assessment performance) are constructively aligned?  
  • How does your assessment match with your intended learning?  
  • Have you analysed what your assessment is ‘testing’? (eg. declarative knowledge, process, creating knowledge)  
  • Have you matched appropriately the kind of knowledge you’re testing with the kind of mode you are using to test their performance? |
| **Assessment diversity** | • Brainstorm alternative ways you could assess the performances of students meeting your intended learning.  
  • Have you analysed the diversity of your course assessment/across the program?  
  • How have you contributed to learning, and assessing that learning, from a program perspective? eg. what program capabilities have you facilitated the students to learn/develop as a result of undertaking your course? |
| **Moderation and assessment standards** | • How will you assess the quality of the students’ assessment tasks?  
  • What makes for good criteria? What are your criteria assessing/valuing?  
  • If you’re the Course Coordinator, how will you bring your Course Teaching Team along with you on your assessment?  
  • How will you/your teaching team/your students know what your assessment will ‘look’ like? What will quality look like for your assessment tasks? |

### Monitoring during your course delivery

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| **Practice during learning & teaching** | • Has your formative assessment been successful from a learner’s / teacher’s perspective? Why/Why not?  
  • What are the students asking as clarifying questions about the assessment and its design?  
  • What connections (about their learning) are being made by your learners while they are undertaking/completing the assessment tasks? |
| **Practice during summative assessment** | • What are you learning from student interpretations of your assessment design?  
  • How did the students perform on your designed assessment tasks? Did it meet your expectations? Why/Why not? |
Review and reflection

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Sample questions to guide your assessment design</th>
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| **Moderation and assessment standards** | • How effective was your process of moderation within your teaching team?  
• How did you validate your assessment standards across your course’s teaching team?  
(ie. every team member assessed consistently, a Distinction given by one assessor would also be given by another assessor within the team if they ‘blind marked’ it)  
• How did you validate your assessment standards across the program and/or across other similar programs delivered by other providers?  
• How did you validate your assessment outcomes according to industry/profession/community standards for your discipline? |
| **Significant insights informing future practice** | • What did you learn from planning, designing and implementing your assessment?  
• What kinds of learners did you encourage/nurture because of the ways you designed your assessment?  
• What patterns of student performance occurred across the course cohort? Do these patterns indicate any feedback on your assessment design?  
• How/what will you change in the assessment and/or curriculum next time you deliver this course? Why? |
| **Links to RMIT strategic directions** | • Did you nurture any of the learning qualities outlined in the new set of RMIT Graduate Attributes articulated in the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010?  
• How are you using your CES data to reflect on and review your assessment design? |

Further reading


