

2018

Integrated Programme Assessment

A Practical Guide

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The Biosciences team at Brunel University London were recipients of a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) 2016 in recognition of their work on Integrated Programme Assessments, and the award has enabled us to disseminate and share practice with the sector.

This practical guide is designed based on our experience and discussions during a workshop held at Brunel University London in November 2017. The aim of this guide is to provide a framework for subject teams or departments who are interested in rethinking assessment, with practical suggestions for how this can be achieved.

We hope you will be inspired to rethink your assessment strategy!

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The Biosciences team aimed to:

eliminate the compartmentalised approach to learning experienced by students on modular programmes
reduce the assessment load for staff and students

These were distilled from discussions which highlighted that:


students were not linking information together
students felt they had too much to do, and were strategic in managing assessment load and revision
there were too many pieces of assessment with small credit weightings
staff were overwhelmed with marking loads
development of skills was dependent on modules
there was a desire to introduce authentic assessments

Recap the agreed reasons for why there is a need to change the assessment strategy, and what change will look like. *This becomes the shared vision for change that will be used as a reminder as necessary throughout the process.*

The agreed barriers and solutions will inform how change can be brought about, and should be used to agree action points and owners. *This forms part of the action plan for change.*

Shared vision

Action plan of next steps



Introducing Integrated Programme Assessment (IPA) was facilitated by changing Senate Regulations: references to required module credits were changed to assessment credits. This allows IPA to be used alongside modules, which may be appropriate for programmes with many options at level 6.

Please note that designing assessments will be a reiterative process, and one that will require several sessions. However, in order to ensure that everyone has the same understanding of what is to be achieved, it is useful to start this aspect with a session where everyone can practice designing assessment tasks and agree the principles of what will be the assessment strategy.

: 2 hrs

This session is designed to:

- a) determine principles of assessment
- b) design assessment tasks

To determine appropriate assessments that allow students to demonstrate how they meet the learning outcomes.

The agreed aim of the programme; Examples of assessment practice from a diverse range of programmes, departments, institutions. Examples of authentic assessments (for example, use reports, reviews, briefing notes instead of essays; plan an event e.g. a literary or music festival; blogs, promotional/information leaflets, video clips in addition to posters and presentations).

In groups of 5, spend 15 min recording on flip-chart paper what the main principles of thees of

Integrating assessments will have reduced the number of summative assessments, increasing the importance of each. You will therefore want to make sure that students are appropriately supported with formative tasks that ideally form the basis of further staff-student discussion. As formative activities are an important part of the teaching strategy, which in turn influences how the programme is organised, it must be discussed prior to approving the changes.

: 90 minutes

This session is designed to:

- a) identify how best to support the assessment strategy
- b) determine the changes required

This session should be a joint session between academics and key administrative staff, including (where appropriate) any central professional services staff/representatives involved in delivery.



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Previously under the modular structure there were three separate assessments linked to laboratory sessions within the individual modules. In the synoptic approach, all of the laboratory sessions still occur and are linked with formative a0887ir.(i1MCID 22Tm0 g41.92 t)-3(i2 /P AMCID

The synoptic exam was a new style of assessment introduced with IPA and so there is no prior comparator.

This assessment takes the form of a seen exam question, which is revealed to students 7 days in advance of the exam. The students therefore have one week to research and prepare their answers

These steps articulate important aspects of programme design and support a structured approach to programme development:

Consider the aim(s)