ASSESSMENTS

Introduction

This section identifies and discusses the management and implementation of assessment and feedback on assessed work. It is important that you are exposed to diversity in teaching, learning and assessment methods during your study and set out below are descriptions of procedures for the assessment of:

•   Written assignments (essays, journals)

•   Practical Assignments

•   Seminar Presentations

•   Class Participation

What Is Assessment?

Assessment is a generic term for a set of processes that measure the outcomes of the learning, in terms of the knowledge acquired, an understanding of the subject and the skills gained. Assessment therefore provides:

•   A means, by which students are graded, passed or fail.

•   The basis for decisions on whether students are ready to proceed, to qualify for an award or to demonstrate competence to practice.

•   Feedback on the learning and help to improve performance.

•   Staff with the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

The Programme's assessment strategy has been designed to measure how well students achieve the programme learning objectives to ensure that the learning outcomes of each module has been met. Assessments entail the required standard for the award of the Honours degree. Assessed assignments are also important learning opportunities, which build upon each other as well as providing the means of formal assessment. With this in mind, an assessment strategy has been devised in which:

•   Every assessment is designed to be of use to the student and to relate closely to the academic development;

•   Every assessment is designed to provide information on the ability and progress towards fulfilling the aims of the programme;

•   A range of assessment methods, both formative and summative, are used, assessing both the reflective and analytic oral and written abilities as well as the practical understanding, creative and collaborative skills and ability to undertake research and enquiry;

- All modules are assessed. Every module is assessed by more than one method.

Assessment Strategies

Learning outcomes provide a focus for appropriate formative and summative assessments. You will be assessed throughout the level of study both formatively and summatively against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Formative assessment takes place though formal and informal feedback. Summative assessment is the formal process of assessment at the end of each level that is carried out by a team of Internal Examiners, with External Examiners verifying a fair and transparent process.

- **Formative Assessment** – designed to provide learners with feedback on progress and development but does not contribute towards the overall assessment;

- **Summative Assessment** – measures achievement or failure in respect of a learner's performance in relation to the learning outcomes of the programme of study.

It is the aim of the Programme Team to ensure that all aspects of the assessment are clear and transparent. Assessment outcomes are designed to be positive and assist your learning.

Units of Assessments

The programme uses a variety of assessment platforms. You need to develop a wide range of skills and be confident, articulate and expressive in a variety of media. The programme uses a variety of assessment methods and different units of assessments to evaluate your learning.

Creative Process Journal

You will be required to form your Creative Process Journal every semester. This will become a visual and textual record of your creative evolution as a thinker and designer. In this way, you learn to describe, analyse, reflect and evaluate your own knowledge, experience and process. A wide range of media to articulate the creative process, including e.g. image, text, interactive media or sound may be used. Self-evaluation and peer-evaluation are encouraged to develop critical awareness of the creative process.

Research Portfolio or Practice-based/Studio Assignments

A portfolio may contain written material such as objective descriptions, constructive evaluations, copies of seminar reports and examples of written material together with visual and aural material, design work, video and photographic records that demonstrate the ability to appropriately research the chosen area. Practical assignments allow you to explore different areas. Practice-based realised assignments are hands-on and allow you to be creative and resourceful within the

scope of limited resources and time. Timelines and accuracy become key cornerstones of assessment. They are important programme components as they enable you to develop and extend your understanding of professional practice.

Written Assignments

Written assignments ranging from 1,500 words to 3,000 words are set in Level 1 and 2. They are designed to develop skills of analysis and comparative study, the ability to research, develop and test ideas and communicate effectively in writing. Written assignments will push you to generate answers rather than select them; demonstrate the knowledge within broad limits and demonstrate originality and creativity in a topic.

In Level 3, you will use these skills in a Design Research essay that is equivalent to 6,000 words. The project is broken down into two components. The seminar presentation is equivalent to 2,000 words and counts for 25% while the draft essay counts for 50% of the assessment weighting in Semester 1. The final paper is 6,000 words in length, in which you can submit other modes of presentation, relevant to, and appropriate for, the area and context of the research. All submission proposals must be negotiated and agreed with the assigned supervising tutor.

Seminar Presentations

Seminar Presentations provides the opportunity for you to explore, examine and discuss subjects with your peers. They are designed to develop your ability to research, analyse and communicate ideas.

Practical Presentation

This category includes sessions with a peer audience in order to present a specific aspect of the curriculum. Exhibition modes will be used normally for practical studio modules.

Associated Components to Assessments

Progress Reports

Tutors submit progress reports to track progress and studentship of students with concerns. This may apply to students who have attendance issues and have serious disciplinary concerns. The reports will record evidence of any action that could impact the student's progress and learning. Tutors will speak to students concerned in strict confidence. All reports will be documented and presented at the Board of Examiners meeting.

Class Participation

You are expected to attend all scheduled classes required and are encouraged to contribute to class discussions. Participation is the key to a lively class. Class participation provides the opportunity to improve oral and verbal skills, as well as the ability to listen. Comments that are vague, repetitive, unrelated to the current topic, disrespectful of others, or without sufficient foundation will be evaluated negatively. What matters is the quality of one's contributions to the class discussion, not the number of times one speaks.

Class participation is an assessable component.

Studentship

Studentship describes your commitment and attendance on a programme of full-time study. You are expected to attend and participate in all timetabled classes.

For each level of study (120 credits) there are 'learning hours' (1200) that must be completed for progression to the next level of study, or to be eligible for an exit award of a Diploma or Degree. A percentage of those learning hours are timetabled as 'contact hours' for each module; that is classes, lectures, seminars and workshops, directly transferring knowledge and information from the lecturer to student/s either individually, or as a group.

In Level 1 there are 18 hours of timetabled contact time; 14 hours for Level 2; and 12 in Level 3. The timetable is designed to provide a range of learning experiences that include peer learning and discussion, as well as development of an individual designer. You are expected to attend and participate in the full spectrum of these learning and teaching methods to gain the maximum from the programme, or level of study. On passing each level of study (120 credits) you will be eligible for progression to the next level or an exit award (at Levels 2 and 3 only).

Assessment is a detailed and thorough process that also considers your individual profile and studentship on the programme. An unsatisfactory profile may result in non-progression or non-award of the exit award, therefore commitment and attendance is a key aspect of achieving satisfactory studentship for each level of study.

Independent Learning

As part of the learning hours for each level of study (1200) you will be expected to complete work that is 'directed learning', and is described as work set by the lecturer to be developed outside direct contact teaching hours. You will also be expected to undertake 'independent learning', which is self motivated study related to all modules. This includes readings, research and practical projects and assignments that are set by the lecturers as part of the coursework. The success of the development and progress as a designer requires you to initiate ideas and develop an individual resource for your own reference and exploration. This is a core skill that you are expected to develop over the course of study, to be able to work independently as a professional designer in a competitive and fast moving industry.

Personal & Professional Development (PPD)

Personal and professional development in the Design Communication programme is integrated as part of the practical studio modules across all levels. The module tutors act as the PPD tutors in providing support to;
- time management
- research, presentation & planning
- personal effectiveness
- portfolio building
- understanding and handling assessment
- coping with stress
- importance of reflection

The main focus of the PPD system will be to encourage the 'learning-to-learn' concept and will allow you to fulfil your potential as an independent learner. This makes the programme less teacher-dependent and you would be able to direct your own learning incrementally.

Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria are determined by the aim and objectives of the programme and the learning outcomes of the modules.

They also relate to commonly accepted criteria for education at this level. Assessment Criteria are set out in charts with written descriptions of attainment for each band of marks. The criteria are important benchmarks used by the internal examiner in assessing the quality of the work and for students to be able to reflect on their performance and progress. In more specific terms the criteria will articulate:

• The ability to develop and test ideas in theory and practice;

• Different levels of attainment and their relation to the learning objectives and learning outcomes of the modules;

• The measurement of the attainment of intellectual and academic skills;

• The use of appropriate methods for the development of communication skills

• The grasp, engagement and implementation of professional skills.

Marks

Marks carry evaluative and accumulative weight as to the worthiness of the achievement. Individual marks for assignments are consolidated with other marks in a module to give an overall mark. The weighting of each of the marks is set out in the module descriptions in Section C.

Assessment Feedback

An important aspect of assessment is the way that you are advised about the outcome. The programme uses a variety of written and oral feedback mechanisms to provide information and advice about the quality of the work and strategies to move forward to the next assignment. The type of assessment feedback used is designed to complement the method of assessment used. For example, you will find that most written work submitted will have feedback provided in written form. Oral feedback is more appropriate following the assessment of a student's overall development during the year but will also be supplemented by written formative feedback.

It is critical that lecturers provide the feedback, so that you have a clear understanding of the programme's particular policy and methodology for providing assessment feedback, and that you are aware of the assessment material, the learning outcomes and the work. This allows for standardization, which allows for monitoring, auditing and improving the methods of feedback and assessment.

You will be provided with information before commencing an assignment as to:

• how work will be assessed;,

• when and how assessment results will be communicated,

• what format of assessment feedback to expect,

• an agreed timeframe for the submission of assessed work and the provision of feedback, both throughout the academic year, and in individual instances, and

• details of assessment criteria and learning outcomes for the module and information on whether and how assessment feedback will be related to these criteria and outcomes.

It is important for feedback to be given as soon as is possible, usually no more than

two weeks after the hand-in deadline. You should expect the comments made to be insightful and constructive and designed to be helpful in addressing areas of weakness. Students may also be provided with a PROVISIONAL mark. The Board of Examiners that meets at the end of the academic year and may be subject to adjustment confirms the final mark. However, the provisional mark is useful and important to indicate the standard of the work.

Completing the cycle of learning, assessment and assessment feedback is important in the creation of an integrated student academic experience. Assessment feedback should identify further actions to be taken to develop the knowledge and learning abilities. The feedback process provides the opportunity for you to work towards a set of goals, aiming at improving the learning and overall performance in the next set of assessments.

Student Feedback

Student feedback is also very important. As part of the quality assurance processes, programmes are regularly monitored to assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategies. You will be asked to give written feedback on a module-by-module basis and there are frequent group feedback sessions, particularly at the end of the semester. In addition, students will be asked to elect student representatives from the year group to sit on Programme and Faculty Boards. They play an important role in advising issues related to programme delivery.

The Board of Examiners

The procedure for agreeing and confirming marks and any resultant consequences is a very formal process. The guidelines governing assessment and examination are set out in the Academic Regulations and they cover every aspect of the process. Overall management of the Board of Examiners is a formal meeting that takes place at the end of each academic year to consider and confirm all marks awarded in that year. This meeting is preceded by formal meetings at programme and faculty level where marks are reviewed and agreed by lecturing staff – the internal examiners. Mark-sheets are then forwarded to the Board of Examiners who considers all marks awarded across the College.

The Consequences of Failure

A possible outcome of assessment is that a student may be awarded a fail mark. This may happen because the work presented does not meet the required standard. The College uses the percentage marking system where any mark below 40% is deemed to be a fail. In most cases and if a student has demonstrated that he/she has made a serious attempt at the assignment an opportunity will be given to retrieve the failure by attempting the assignment again or undertaking an alternative assignment. Students should refer to the regulations relating to the consequences of failure in the Academic Regulations.

Failure can lead to a situation where you are forced to withdraw from the programme. This is extremely rare but it is vital that the programme sets and maintains high standards and expects its students to aspire to those standards.

Failure can also result because of the imposition of a penalty. This will happen if you hand in work late or not at all. Deadlines are important and must be adhered to. The programme will only grant extensions to hand-in if there are very persuasive reasons.

There are of course circumstances that are beyond control, for example illness, that may prevent a student from continuing the studies or inhibit the performance. Again, there are regulations and procedures to ensure legitimate reasons for any unfairly penalties and such circumstances can be taken into account at assessments. The most important issue is for you to advise the College of any problem that may affect the studies as soon as possible. It is much easier to take action to deal with the potential consequences of problems before they occur. The College takes great care to ensure that student's privacy is respected if the nature of the problem is confidential.