

# CLIPP Student Workload Guidelines

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## Purpose

To outline student workload allocation based on credit point value, the total number of learning hours, the number of assessment tasks, the types of assessments and the alignment of assessment tasks relevant to the course learning outcomes (ie assessment tasks need to measure course level learning outcomes). Course coordinators need to think about the assessment type (ie written work) and the assessment task (ie literature review, report, exam etc) and document this in the course outline. Course Descriptions must contain sufficient information for students to understand the task. Refer to the Course Description template on the University governance website. Student workload models should also take into consideration the assessment difficulty, marking time, student ability and effort required to meet the task (Bowler 2012).

## Definitions

**Program:** A program of study/research leading to the granting of an official award or qualification of the University contained in University Schedule 5.1. A course contains subsidiary elements variously referred to as courses, competency courses or modules.

**Assessment:** Assessment is the process of gathering and analysing information in order to guide and make judgements about students' learning in relation to curriculum goals and/or competency standards. This formative process recognises the benefits to students of making sense of, reflecting on, and developing their own contributions to knowledge.

Assessment guides learning and teaching by providing constructive feedback to all participants in teaching/learning processes and informs judgements about student

achievement.

**Course:** A course of study is defined as a discrete body of learning and/or skills. All courses of study are approved by Academic Board in Course Outline form. A Course Description incorporating the approved Course Outline plus specific administrative arrangements for that semester must be given to each student enrolling in a course.

**Course Outline:** The Course Outline is the University accredited document that outlines the nature and purpose of the course. It also outlines all assessable tasks and other requirements that must be successfully completed by students undertaking the course.

**Course Description:** *The Course Description must be made available for the students at the beginning of the teaching period (within two weeks) or at an early learning session where a student is taking the course in a weekend, vacation or other block mode.* This Course Description is the learning contract which forms the basis on which students gain the credit points assigned to the course. The Course Description must reflect the substantive components of the Course Outline and cannot introduce new requirements not already delineated in the Course Outline. This document should contain information regarding student workload specific to assessment learning tasks.

**Workload:** The learning workload of a course is defined as the number of hours necessary to be given by an average student to learning activities in order to achieve the objectives of that course. A semester coursework load for an average full-time student is approximately 600 hours calculated as about 15 weeks at an average of 40 hours per week given to learning activities directed at achieving the objectives of the courses taken by a full-time student in a semester.

**Credit Point:** One (1) credit point is the value of approximately 10 hours of learning activity by an average student directed at achieving the objectives of a course. Learning activities may include: pre-lecture preparation, reading; participation in lectures and tutorials; participation in laboratory sessions; conduct of private research; work on individual and team projects; writing essays; problem-solving and project work; individual consultation with teachers; preparation for tests and examinations; taking tests and examinations.

Sixty credit points is the standard value of one full-time semester workload in a course and 120 credit points the standard value of one year workload in a course.

The credit point value of a course will normally be 15 and the sum of credit points in a semester for courses taken by a full-time student making normal progress is 60.

The credit point value of a courses is constant regardless of the course, location and year of a program in which a course is taken.

**Learning Tasks and Assessment:** Learning tasks and assessment are both the process through which students will learn in the course and the learning products of the course which form the basis for judgements about student learning achievement during the course. Such work products emerge from intellectual/creative processes that are supported by teacher-student consultation and

feedback.

Learning tasks and assessment are not simply the stipulated work products of the course; they must be seen in the context of the whole course as the processes through which learning takes place. Learning tasks and assessment enable the integration of the learning objectives, content, learning activities and assessment of student learning throughout the course. Thus learning tasks and assessment can be activity-based, of varying magnitudes, conducted at different times during a teaching period and may include negotiation about their various forms. Learning tasks and assessment must also involve reflection on both the learning process and the products of learning.

**Moderation of Assessment:**

Moderation is a quality assurance process by which an individual or group not involved in setting or marking an assessment task confirms that at all stages that assessment has been conducted with accuracy, consistency and fairness. Moderation procedures allow for an objective view of the assessment structure and the information provided to the students. Students are not content experts however they are expected to understand how a task meets a desired learning outcome and this in part is the role of the moderator. Moderation contributes to the continuous improvement of assessment practices and to sharing good practice among colleagues. Moderation guidelines are currently being developed for the School of Health Sciences.

**Integrity of Assessment:**

Is achieved when students receive proper credit for assessable work which is clearly their own.

**Contact workload:**

Teacher guided activity including lectures, tutorials, studios, seminars, workshops, laboratory classes, fieldwork, clinical experience, computer managed learning, summative assessment and some formative assessment

**Non-contact workload:**

Learner activity including study, readings, research, assignments and other formative assessment, computer managed learning

## Calculating Student Workload

### Considerations for student workload

When designing assessment tasks within courses and the program overall, it is important to consider the overall workload for students including:

- (1) How long will it take students to complete and submit each assessment task?
- (2) How much time per week will most students have available for assessment?
- (3) How many assessment tasks do students have in other subjects?
- (4) When are all the assessments due (in all the student's courses)?

*(Student Workload Policy, Latrobe University 2012)*

Calculation of workload should also include all aspects of learning such as:

- (1) Class contact time (including lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, laboratories etc)
- (2) Reading (with consideration of both the amount of reading and the degree of difficulty)
- (3) Note taking
- (4) Field work
- (5) Practicum Learning
- (6) Online work (online discussion forums)
- (7) Discussion of topics and issues with peers and faculty
- (8) Engaging in collaborative group work
- (9) Skills practice
- (10) Project work
- (11) Assessments (written, oral, online)
- (12) Preparation for and sitting tests and examinations
- (13) Time for reflection and/or journal writing

*(ACU Guidelines on Student Workload nd)*

### Abstract of previously agreed UB process (2007)

Course Value	Recommendation	Maximum number of tasks
15 CP (150 learning hours)	3 tasks	4 tasks
10CP (100 learning tasks)	2 – 3 tasks	3 tasks
5CP (50 learning hours) (HMAL only)	2 tasks – one practical + one theory assessment	2 tasks
2.5 CP 25 learning hours (HMAL only)	2 tasks – one practical + one theory assessment (smaller than for 10 CP course)	2 tasks

**HMAL:** Human Movement Activity Laboratory

**HM Prof Prac:** Human Movement Professional Practice

**Relationship between credit point value, words in assessment tasks and overall weighting for assessment of course learning outcomes**

1	250-300	5
2	500-600	15
3	750-900	20
4	1000-1200	25
5	1250-1500	35
6	1500-1800	40
7	1750-2100	45
8	2000-2400	55
9	2250-2700	60
10	2500-3000	65
11	2750-3300	75
12	3000-3600	80
13	3250-3900	85
14	3500-4200	95
15	3750-4500	100

*(Credit Point and Student Workload Policy, Latrobe University nd)*

**Assessment types, associated word limits and overall weighting within the course**

Type	Equivalent to	%
Activity Log	1 000 words	20-25%
Annotated bibliography	1 500 words	35-40%
Literature review	1 250 words	35%
Assignment	1 500 words	35-40%
Essay	1 000 words	20-25%
Essay group	1 000 words per member	20-25%
Exam	1 hour = 1 000 words	20-25%
Exam	1 1/2 hours = 1 500 words	35-40%
Exam	2 hours = 2 000 words	45-50%
Group presentation	1 000 per member	20-25%
Oral presentation	15 minute	20-25%
Poster presentation	1 000 words	20-25%
Multimedia resource	1 750 words	40-45%
Portfolio	1 000 words	20-25%
Digital portfolio	2 000 words	45-50%
Teaching portfolio	2 hours = 2 000 words	45-50%
Practical music test	15 minute	15-20%
Practical test	500 words	10-15%
Practicum report	N/A	50%
Reflective Journal	2 000 - 3 000 words	55-65%
Research project proposal	1 000 words	20-25%
Research project interim report	1 000 words	20-25%
Ld iResearch project final report	2 000 words	45-50%
Response to reading	1 500 words	35-40%
Reading task	2 000 words	45-50%
Response to employment criteria	2 000 words	45-50%
Learning plan	2 000 words	45-50%
Participation and journal	1 000 words	20-25%
Design and Technology portfolio	2 000 words	45-50%

*(Credit Point and Student Workload Policy, Latrobe University nd)*

## Hurdles

If hurdles (conditions for passing a course other than overall mark) are to be applied, they must be clearly stated and explained to the student in the Course Description. Hurdle tasks are strongly supported where there the issue of OHS concern and that no fulfilling a task is likely to result in a student or associated injury.

### Some common hurdles:

1. Exam mark: a common hurdle here is 50%, i.e. If a student fails to score 40% in the exam they will fail the course, no matter how small a proportion of the overall mark it comprises. Exam hurdles are particularly relevant where assignments could be of dubious origin, or where group work is used extensively. Setting an exam hurdle below 50% can be comforting to nervous students, who might expect to perform below their ability under exam conditions.
2. Practical performance: passing a competency test on some vital skill may be essential to passing a course. If this is being applied, Course Coordinators need to demonstrate/justify why this is a vital skill. Practical classes designed to meet learning outcomes are also valid within certain courses.
3. Attendance as a hurdle: Caution must be applied to setting unrealistic hurdles on e.g. attendance at class. Note that, while attendance at lectures is not compulsory (although desirable), attendance at other scheduled classes (tutes, practical's) is normally expected. Compulsory classes must be stated within the Course Description. Grades for tutorial participation/ attendance should not count for more than 10% of a courses assessment. Formal assessments such as group presentations within tutorials do not contribute to this.
4. Equity and hurdles: The need for equity must be borne in mind when setting and applying hurdles.  
(*Credit Point and Student Workload Policy, Latrobe University nd*)

## Formative Assessment

The inclusion of formative or feed forward systems of assessment and feedback are important within the overall assessment matrix of a subject. They can act as enablers for students to develop academic skills and improve overall learning. These systems of assessment focus on functional development of skills and knowledge related to aspects of a subject that recognize that learning is developmental and progressive. Formative assessment can contribute to the overall development of explicit course learning outcomes through integrated tasks that contribute to a summative task at the conclusion of the course.

Here are some examples of formative assessment *Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (n.d)*

### Good examples of feedback dialogue in class include:

1. Providing feedback using one-minute papers
2. Reviewing feedback in tutorials where students are asked to read the feedback comments they have been given and discuss these with peers (they might also be asked to suggest strategies to improve performance next time);
3. Asking students to find one or two examples of feedback comments that they found useful and to explain how they helped.
4. Having students give each other descriptive feedback on their work in relation to published criteria before submission;
5. Peer review during group projects as specified by the course coordinator



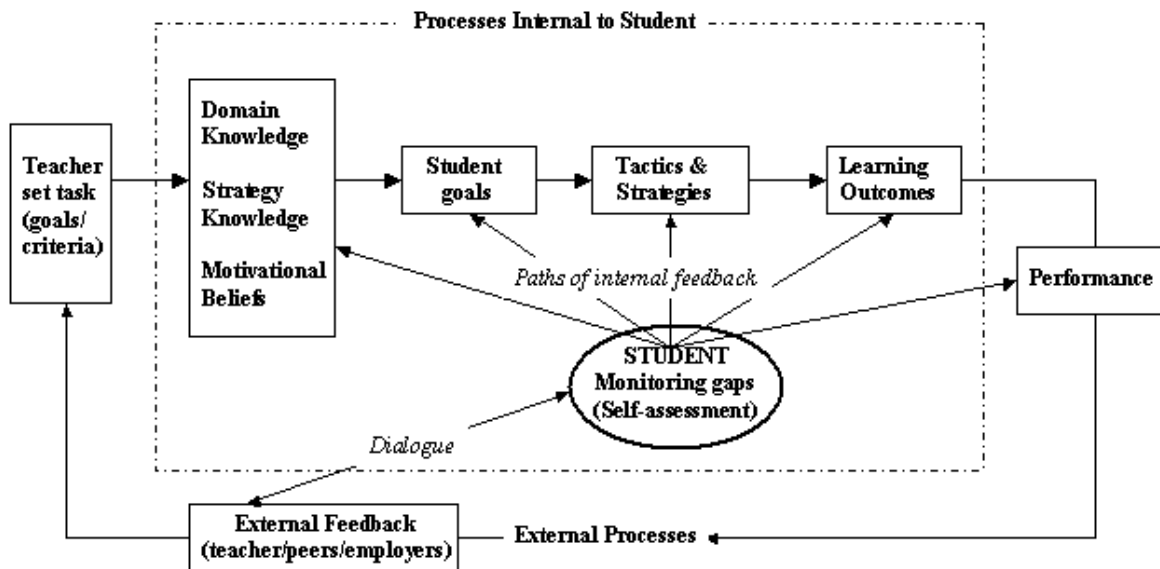


FIGURE 1: A Model of the Formative Assessment and Feedback

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (n.d)

### Providing feedback which encourages learning

When considering assessment and methods of feedback it is important to remember the role of feedback in the learning cycle of students overall progression throughout university.

Succinct, meaningful feedback is essential to learning and to sound assessment practices. Feedback is most effective when it is:

- Timely:
  - Students should receive marks, assignments and feedback as soon as possible, and in time to improve performance in the next assignment.
- Personalized:
  - Feedback needs to be inclusive and suit the target audience (where possible).
- Empowering:
  - Aimed at strengthening and consolidating learning
- As a gateway to future learning:
  - Consideration of the choice and delivery of language within the feedback cycle. The use of words that emphasis what students can do to improve their work.
- Analytical:
  - Feedback that emphasizes not only the excellent in what they have done, but the reason why it is excellent.
- Constructive:
  - Give guidance to students on areas to improve for future task. This can significantly increase the value that students place on feedback.
- Manageable:
  - Consideration of our time and the students. Too much feedback can be confusing. Feedback needs to be succinct and action focused i.e. “the most important thing you need to do is…….”
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- Emphasizes the role of the lecturer within the assessment task:
  - Rich, timely feedback engenders within students recognition that the assessment tasks is considered important by the assessor.
- Utility:
  - The capacity for the feedback to have application in future assessment tasks within current and future courses.

*(Credit Point and Student Workload Policy, Latrobe University nd)*

## UB Supporting Documents

- Integrity of Assessment Guidelines (LT1304)
- Assessment (Higher Education) Procedure (LT 1254)
- SHS Staff Moodle Page (<http://ubonline.ballarat.edu.au/course/view.php?id=3845#section-23> )

## Responsibility

The responsibility of ensuring that student workload is considered during each course of study is the course coordinator. This is reviewed and reflected during the moderation process. Updates in student workload are documented in the course outline and course descriptions for each course.

## Promulgation

The SHS **Student Workload Guidelines** will be communicated throughout the University of Ballarat via:

1. distributed via email to all staff within the SHS;
2. a link to the document is placed on the SHS website and staff moodle page; and/or
3. The SHS Staff Hand Book is updated to reflect accurate information.
4. Part of Staff Induction Processes for sessional and ongoing staff

## Implementation

Academic and administrative staff will be aware of this guidelines as it will form part of the academic and administrative staff induction process for all new staff within the SHS and covered by the appropriate member of the senior leadership team or supervisor (for example Business Manager, Discipline Head, SHS Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching). This will be clearly communicated to all course co-ordinators, program co-ordinators.

## Forms/Record Keeping

All documentation regarding Student Workload should be captured in the Course Description and Moodle Site.

## References

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