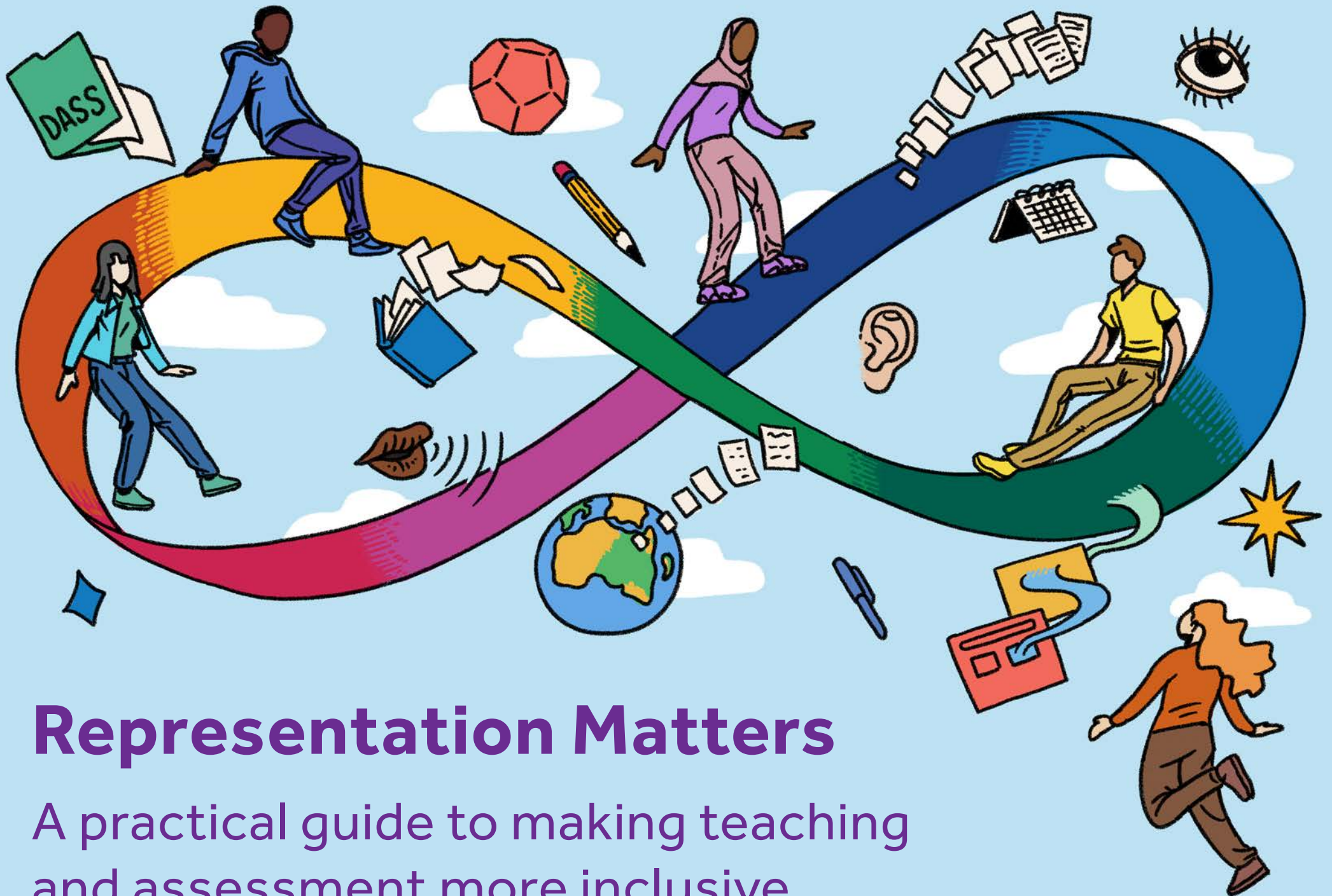


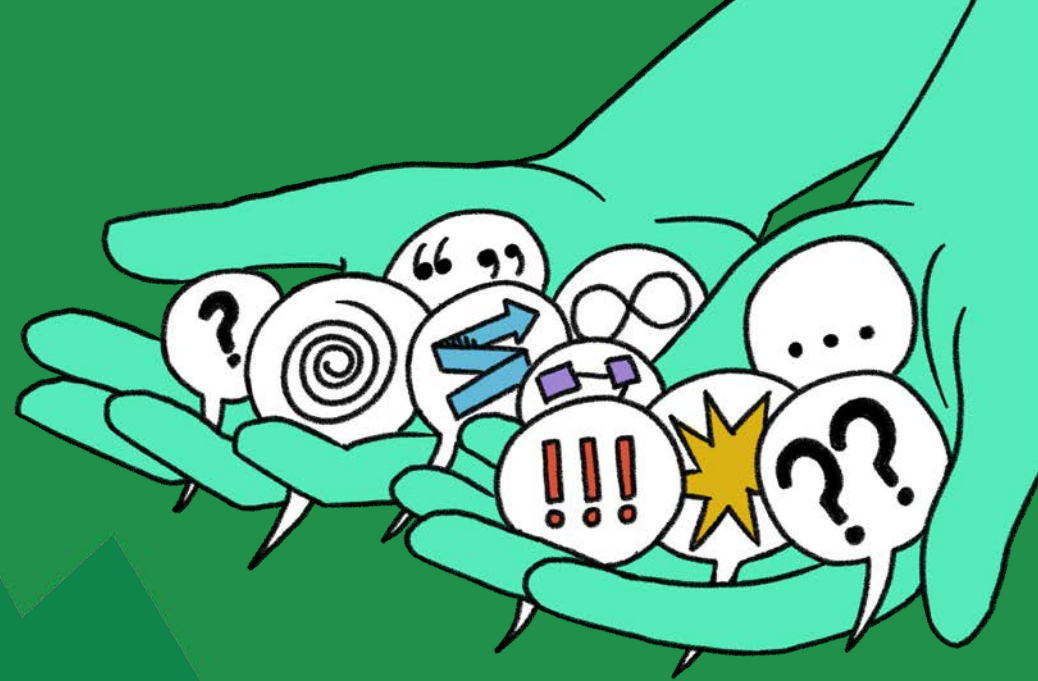


Representation Matters

A practical guide to making teaching and assessment more inclusive

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Introduction to the resource:

The inclusive ecosystem, key concepts, and how this resource works

What does this resource do, who is it for and how can you use it?

This resource is for all academics who lead a course unit and want some straightforward pointers and tips about how to make the assessment process more inclusive.

The aim of this resource is for it to be helpful at any time in the teaching cycle, and the suggestions are designed to be simple, straightforward and ultimately hugely impactful for your students, without requiring any major changes to your course unit.

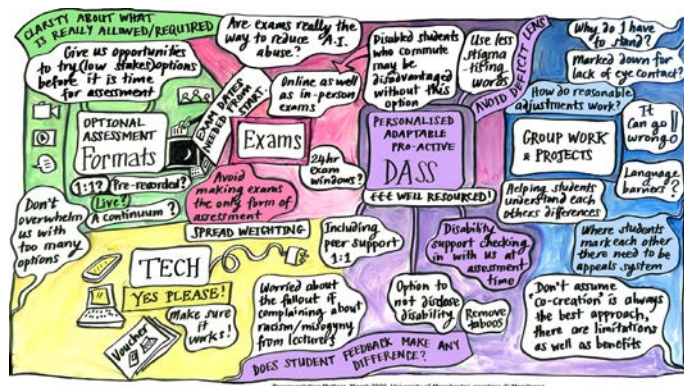
The resource follows the journey, or lifecycle, of an inclusive course unit, from what you might consider before teaching, via key teaching and learning and milestones, to the final assessment and beyond. Each section begins with some key questions your students may be asking at each stage in the course unit. The resource can be navigated sequentially, or you can dip into the relevant sections depending on when in your own teaching you pick this up. Crucially, this resource should be helpful at any time.



This resource was produced as part of the *Representation Matters* project, funded by the University of Manchester's Teaching and Learning Strategy Fund.

Alongside sector-recognised good practice, student experiences underpin and are at the heart of this resource. Where possible, we have stayed faithful to and raised students' voices in this resource by including their direct and unedited quotes, and captured their experiences in the illustrations included here, created by creative practitioners Dominique Brouwers, Stacey Coughlin, Dr Pen Mendonca and Raluca-Elena Valcescu, based on their observations at the workshops. This was a deliberate ethical choice: rather than paraphrasing or summarising on the participants' behalves, we have preserved their words as spoken or written, so that the people who shared these experiences remain audible in their own voice throughout this resource.

*Images: Student experiences captured at the workshops, online and in person.
Illustrations by Dr Pen Mendonca.
See high res versions here.*



Why have a resource like this?

The UK's Office for Students asks all universities to take proactive steps to widening access to and participation in Higher Education. Each university is required to scrutinise what they are doing to support students who identify with protected characteristics and to produce, and act on, a plan to enhance access and participation (known as an Access and Participation Plan or APP for short – see our UoM APP web pages [here](#)). Some of that work is about supporting students into HE, but much is also about how we support them once they get here.

Assessments are not a simple, neutral means of evaluating knowledge and skills. Assessment structures, formats, content, processes and practice often reflect the wider power and structural dynamics within which they are created. Those dynamics are known to contribute to retention and awarding gaps. Learning about these issues and improving processes and practices iteratively is, therefore, vital for reducing inequalities within higher education outcomes. This resource provides a step in that development.

The tips in this resource draw on principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which means designing inclusive and equitable teaching and learning for all, from the start. This means that whilst the guidance here is helpful for your students who the APP may target (and in this case, disabled and racially minoritised students played an active role in the co-production of this resource), it is also helpful for all of your students.

The inclusive ecosystem

Of course, this resource doesn't stand alone; from [Disability Advisory Support Services](#) (DASS, the University's central team supporting disabled students), to [Widening Participation](#) work (which broadens access to higher education for underrepresented groups), to [Access, Student Development and Success](#) initiatives supporting students once they arrive, to all of the University's wider student support resources and facilities. There is a rich inclusive ecosystem here to support our students. This resource complements all of this, draws from the expertise of many within this ecosystem and also connects with and signposts to many resources that exist within and beyond the University.



Pace, energy and cultural humility

This resource is also underpinned by the explicit recognition that students arrive with different starting points, different demands on their time and energy, as well as different cultural and educational backgrounds. A useful concept here is [Spoon Theory](#) (Christine Miserandino), which describes how everyday tasks can use up different amounts of energy for different people. The practical takeaway: built-in flexibility and check-ins rather than assuming a single pace works for everyone, and approaching your cohort with cultural humility (staying curious about what you don't yet know about your students' backgrounds and experiences, rather than assuming a shared starting point) creates an amicable environment to work equitably in both teaching and learning.

The life cycle of an inclusive course

Section 1:
Before teaching starts

Section 2:
The first few weeks

Section 3:
The first formative deadline

Section 4:
The first assessment

Section 5:
Mid point check-in

Section 6:
Another formative assessment

Section 7:
Moving toward the final assessment

Section 8:
Post-teaching



The example comments and questions above show student experiences gathered during the workshops held during the making of this resource – both online and in person.

01. Before teaching starts

What does this course unit involve?

The assessment details have changed since I signed up. Why?

The resources for the course unit were unclear and chaotic – how can I get clarity?

The pre-teaching period provides an important opportunity to update teaching content and to ensure your course unit materials are clear, up to date and logically organised. Whilst it might make sense, for pedagogical purposes, to release some material about the course unit week by week as teaching progresses, there is some core information that students will need to know about the course unit from the start. Assessment types and dates, the timetable for teaching, field trips and lab sessions, and resources they may need to access and read, as well as expectation setting, help all students to be able to navigate the course unit clearly from the start.

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Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Ensure the images and examples you use in your slides, Canvas pages and assessments represent diverse bodies and ethnicities.

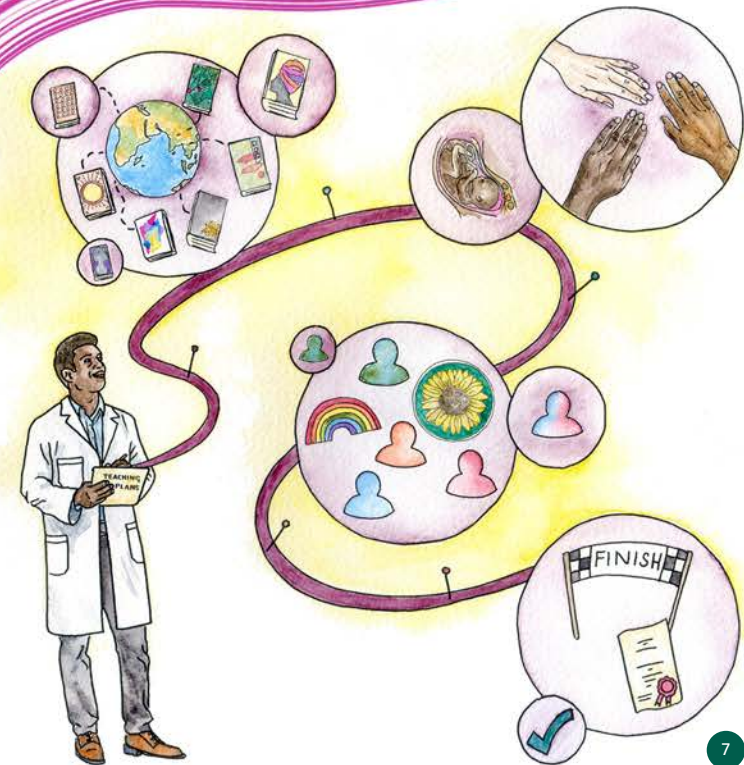
Include work by scholars from the Global South in your reading lists.

Make space for students to surface their own identities and to connect these with the course unit.

Remember the cohort will have a diverse range of experiences beyond the university – from neurodivergent students and English Speakers of Other Languages who appreciate clarity and transparency, to those juggling their degree with care responsibilities, or the need to travel home (whether in the UK or abroad), to those balancing their studies with paid employment. Be mindful of intersecting barriers and challenges.

"I would like to see us move further with student choice and optionality in assessment; but there are barriers typically from academics who regard certain assessment types (often closed-book on-campus exams) as the 'gold standard'"

"I wish I was able to choose 50% weekly coursework tests instead of 100% exam for my courses."



01. Before teaching *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help make your course unit clear and accessible to all from the outset:

Ensure any information students receive about the unit at the start, or even before sign up, matches what will actually happen in the unit where possible.

Make a timeline of the course unit to guide students in what to expect, and what you expect. This could include:

- Dates and titles of lectures and seminars.
- Any workshops or extracurricular trips.
- Key assessment deadlines, including formative deadlines and when feedback will be provided.
- Reminders to check out other resources (e.g. My Learning Essentials [assessment resources](#) when an assessment is coming up, or the Library's [exam support](#) before exams).
- Reminders for wellbeing – you could suggest students take time to meet with the course unit team, their academic advisor or check in with student support resources.

Check your DASS support plans from the start of the course unit; are there accommodations you need to make from the outset? If you are planning field trips, do these need considering too?

Not all disabilities are visible, and not all will be declared, so it can be helpful to anticipate adjustments whether or not they are on the DASS support plans for your course unit – as required under the public sector equality duty.

Ensure all the resources your students will need are ready in advance, including checking resources are in the library or available online. You could direct students to the text book harvest if they are required to have their own.

Consider using the [Canvas Standards](#) that suggest how each week's module might be structured.



Language Matters

Keep language in all course unit materials inclusive, clear and jargon free.

Explain key terms and direct students to this [glossary of academic terminology](#) and [academic phasebank](#).

Check your Canvas modules are clear and populated with working weblinks.

Examples

We might advise students, "*Familiarise yourself with the course unit materials before the first session*", but it is important to be specific about what this really means, providing:

- A clear, dated timeline of all reading, screenings, or materials, with a short rationale linking each to assessment themes.
- Reading lists that include scholars from a range of cultural and geographic backgrounds.
- Clarification of which texts are essential versus optional.
- Guides for [software and installations](#).

02. The first few weeks

What is assessment going to look like on this course unit?

Where can I get help if I'm struggling?

What do lecturers expect from me?

At this early stage of the module, your students may be feeling they need clear guidance about expectations; what the teaching team expects of them, what they can expect from the course unit teaching team (and wider University support structures) and about what is to come in terms of dates. At the same time this information can be quite overwhelming, so there is a balance to be struck between providing information and making sure students feel supported.

Examples

At this stage you might say, "Contact me if you need help." However, for a range of reasons, students may experience barriers in asking directly for help. Alternatives you can put in place to ensure students can still get help at this stage include:

- Regular check-ins during teaching sessions, with explicit information about office hours and how students can use them.
- Anonymous opportunities to ask questions through Canvas discussions or course unit chats.



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Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Avoid assumptions about your students prior knowledge or educational background – consider how you can make all hidden expectations explicit and visible for all. For example, critical analysis and thinking is culturally and socially situated knowledge that not all students will have experienced before.

Consider inclusive approaches to orientation and induction – provide clear information about the course unit and ensure this is available in different formats such as a recorded video (with captions and transcript), written information in Canvas, and a discussion of key points in face to face teaching.

Reassure students through uncertainty and transition challenges – it may help students to contextualise their learning within the wider journey of the degree.

Demonstrate cultural humility by starting to get your cohort to help you avoid assumptions and build relevant cultural and situational awareness.

Support multilingual learning such as students taking notes in their language of choice and encouraging use of sources and resources that are not in English.



02. The first few weeks *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help make the first few weeks of your module easier for students to navigate:

Introduce yourself and the teaching team! It sounds obvious, but let students know who you are, where you are based and how they can contact you to raise problems and questions e.g. when your office hours are.

Make space for students to introduce themselves too, to help build cohort belonging and confidence building.

Provide suggested weekly activities or expectations about time management so students can plan and balance assessment and class activities with other care and work responsibilities.

Provide opportunities for low-stakes engagement and early feedback e.g. discussion boards in Canvas, Padlets, Mentimeters.

Explain what key terms mean, both specific to the subject, but also specific to what you are asking of them e.g. "independent learning", "critical analysis" and "reflection". You can direct students (including links on Canvas) to Library support on [deciphering University language](#) or the University Centre for Academic English's [academic phrasebank](#).

Explain to first year students how university assessment is different from school, college, or work and make your expectations of them clear.

Support your students with managing multiple deadlines and competing demands

Give them a clear timeline of what to expect and when in the course unit, highlight key deadlines and essential sessions that they must attend.



"I wasn't aware in my first year I was meant to be attending every class. Because I'm not lazy, I'm just autistic. I need you to actually tell me explicitly, I can't have this implicit inference where I don't know exactly what you want from me."

"...Materials need to be consistently provided well in advance to neurodivergent students and ideally to everyone. In class breaks and movement breaks are completely necessary."



03. The first formative deadline

What is the purpose of a formative assessment?

Why should I complete an assessment that “doesn’t count”?

How does this relate to later assessments?

To help your students prepare for summative (credit bearing) assessments, it can be helpful to introduce a formative assessment relatively early in the course unit (week 3 or 4) and explain why. Formative assessments do not carry credit but help prepare and focus your students for their summative assessment. They are also an opportunity to test and consolidate their learning – and for you to check how your teaching is going and identify if there is anything you need to make clearer.

Examples

Consider the range of formats possible; from MCQs or quizzes (which can be set to auto-mark), to in-class presentations, to a draft plan of a summative assessment. Other ideas from our project’s student partners include:

- A simulated patient consultation or skills station, assessed only for formative feedback, gives students a safe first attempt at clinical communication before it counts towards their grade.
- A short reflective log entry on a placement task, reviewed by a supervisor but not graded, helps students build the habit of reflection before it becomes a summative requirement.

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Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Explain the purpose and value of formative assessment clearly – make it clear to students what you want from them, when and why.

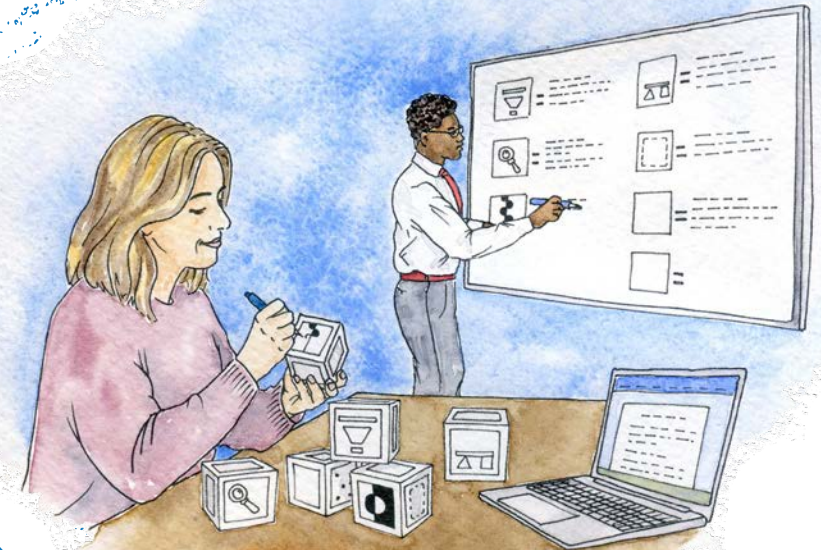
Align formative tasks with learning outcomes and summative assessment expectations – and highlight this continuity to students.

Provide diverse options, content, or formats where possible, while maintaining alignment with learning objectives and the summative assessments.

Use plain English and avoid unexplained academic jargon both when explaining about the formative assessment and in feedback.

Provide timely, constructive, specific and accessible feedback. Ensure this focuses on specific development and next steps. The facility to record verbal feedback in Canvas is helpful to be able to provide formative feedback at scale.

Support and encourage multilingualism, such as the use of sources not in English to accepting machine-assisted translation.



03. The first formative deadline *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help make the first formative deadline easier for students to navigate:

The formative assessment offers an excellent opportunity to remind students of helpful resources and support structures such as:

- Support offered by DASS for students who might need to get registered, including their ["Do I have dyslexia" support](#).
- Resources to help with the [development of academic English](#) provided by the University's Centre for Academic English.
- Resources to help with academic skills development, such as the Library's [My Learning Essentials resources](#). You could ask students to undertake an asynchronous module as part of their formative work, or contact the Library for bespoke content to embed in your Canvas pages.
- Support for students who struggle with perfectionism, anxiety, or confidence such as these [wellbeing resources](#).

"You need to give really clear, explicit instructions and give examples of what that means to staff."

Incorporate formative feedback into contact time. Could a seminar be reframed as a space to supportively discuss key papers or essay plans?

Encourage individual reflection and iterative learning, for example building it into group work or other in-class activities, so that formative assessment is part of a wider continuum.

Offer a psychologically safe and brave opportunity for practice which helps build confidence and reduce fear of failure. Make it clear to your students that formative assessments don't secretly count towards the final mark.

The formative assessment is also a good time to remind students of ways they can contact the course unit team with any questions.



"Using single assessment method for example a timed exam, disadvantages students with learning disabilities. Some assessments use case studies based on one culture rather than diverse."



Preparing for group work

If your course unit involves group work, this may be the point that groups are being assigned, but group work can be difficult. Here are some small actions which can help make group work accessible and inclusive:

- Encourage the group to agree ways of working from the start (including when and how often they will meet, how they will communicate, who will take the lead on roles).
- Encourage your students to engage with the Library's resources on group working – the "understanding the team" element is particularly helpful for the group to work out who can do what.
- Include a component for individual reflection – this is useful learning and helps to mitigate against circumstances where not every group member is contributing evenly.



04. The first assessment

What exactly am I being assessed on?

What support is available if I fail or struggle?

How do I improve for the next assessment?

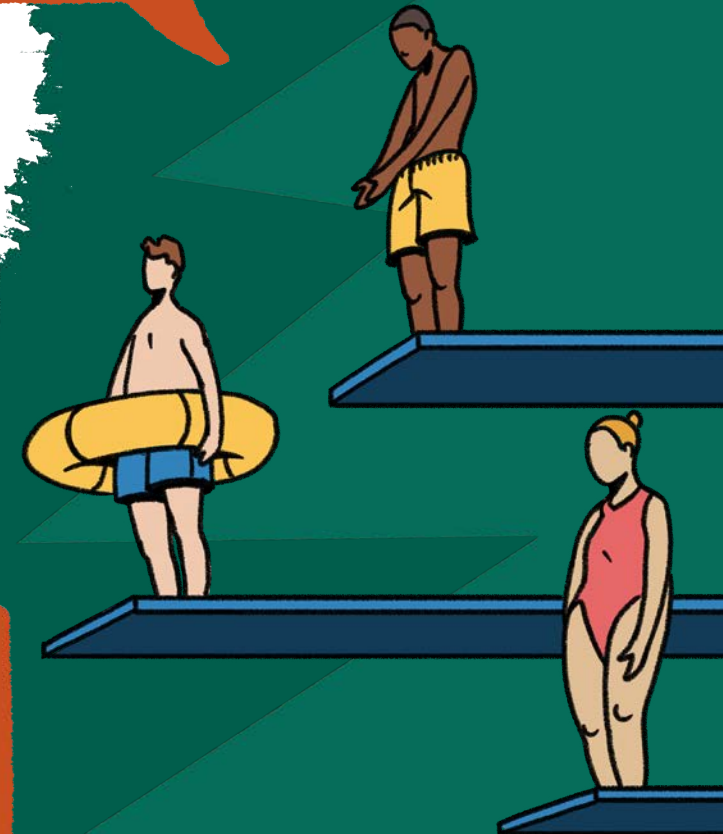
Having more than one assessment helps reduce pressure on students; it also helps them build both their subject specific knowledge in a structured way and improves their assessment literacy. The first assessment plays a crucial role in this, but can also be a pressure point for anyone already struggling. Recognising the emotional toll of high stakes assessment and putting into place steps to support students at this point can both help them get the most out of their learning and assessment, and enhance their experience of the rest of the course unit.

If your course unit only has one assessment at the end of the module this element may not seem relevant, but when you have the opportunity to revise your course unit, we recommend introducing at least one additional assessment during the term, as this can be really important for student experience and success.

Some programmes or course units may use small summative assessments that are worth a small percentage of the overall grade, which is positive option. Formative assessments can be particularly useful, where there is single summative assessment available due to programme or institutional reasons.

"Give us a choice of format for example whether we want to write an essay OR do a presentation but ensure the choices meet the same learning outcomes."

"I'm autistic. I don't know if you don't tell me."



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Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Students may not have undertaken this kind of assessment before (even if it seems obvious or "standard" to you), so make sure you are clear, direct and transparent in what you are asking them to do. Make sure there is no "hidden curriculum".

Ensure assessment is inclusive and accessible by design, if possible, offering different options in questions, case studies, format, and/or mode where to suit different learners.

Provide assessment instructions in multiple formats – never rely on just verbal instructions.

Make marking criteria clear, and if possible provide marked examples of student work from previous years.

Support and encourage multilingualism, from the use of sources not in English to accepting machine-assisted translation (where appropriate with AI rules).

04. The first assessment *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help make the first assessment clear for your students:

Make all assessment *processes* clear:

- What is the deadline?
- What is the submission procedure? (including what type of document e.g. word or pdf)
- Provide accessible guidance regarding extensions and mitigating circumstances.
- If students are registered with DASS, what does this mean for them?
- What are the marking criteria?
- Who will mark the work and when can students expect feedback?

Provide feedback that is actionable and aligned to learning outcomes, and which avoids overly coded or ambiguous language. It is also good practice to support students to interpret and use feedback effectively – you may want to direct them to this [My Learning Essentials course unit](#).

This is a good time to normalise support seeking and academic development, including clarifying routes for follow-up questions and post-assessment support.

Make all assessment *expectations* clear:

- Make sure the assessment brief is in clear language that avoids jargon.
- What are your expectations about structure and argument? Is there a specific structure they should follow?
- What are your expectations about the use of sources? e.g. Are there types of sources that should be specifically used or avoided? Can you suggest a minimum number of sources students should use?
- What are your expectations about style and formatting? e.g. what is the word limit, how many images do you expect students to use, what referencing style should they be using, can they write in the first person?
- Is AI use acceptable in this assessment, and if so, how? Refer to the [University Policy](#) on this to use standardised language.

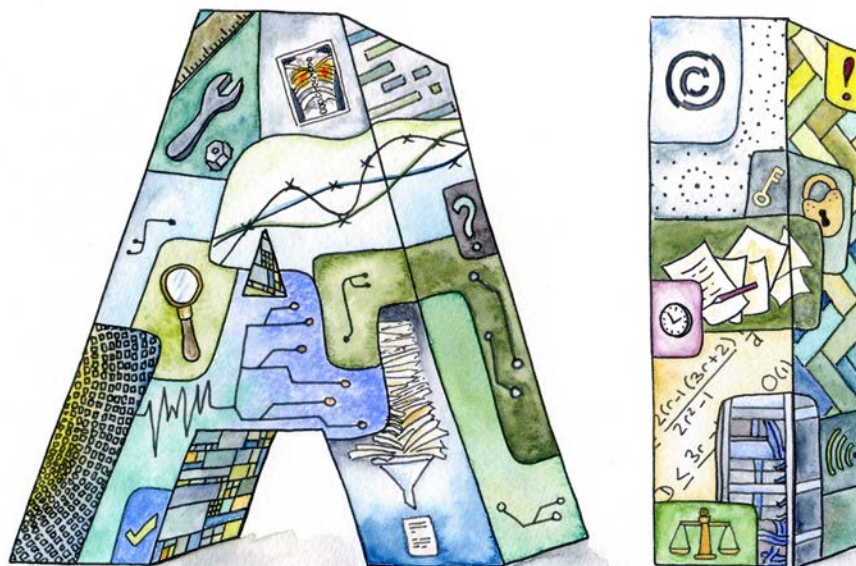
Examples

We might ask our students to “*Write a critical essay engaging with the key debates.*” Whilst this might seem clear to those who have been doing such work for some time, it is important to be explicit about what is really being asked of students, including providing:

- A clear breakdown of what “critical engagement” means, with annotated examples showing the difference between description and analysis.
- Explicit guidance on how many sources are expected, and what counts as sufficient engagement with assigned versus wider reading.

Likewise, we might say “*Show your working.*” However it can help students to provide context and detail for this instruction such as:

- An annotated example showing exactly what level of detail is expected (intermediate steps, unit conversions, assumptions stated).
- Clarification on whether partial credit is available for the correct method without a correct final answer, and how this is applied.



05. Mid point check-in

What do I need to know now?

I'm feeling overwhelmed/exhausted/stressed – where can I find help?

When I started I wasn't aware I'd face these challenges. Is it too late to get support?

The midpoint of the course unit is a good time to check in with your students both to ensure the taught content is making sense to them and that resources are available and accessible as needed, but also to check in on student wellbeing. You might have presented lots of information at the start of the course unit, but many students benefit from this being reiterated again when they have had a chance to find their feet within the course unit content and rhythms of teaching and learning.

"Utilise academic reps more for feedback rather than overwhelming meetings or elongated teacher feedback forms."

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Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Re-check your students' DASS support plans to ensure you are familiar with any updates that have been made since the start of term.

If students who are not registered with DASS have disclosed disabilities to you, can you direct them for the right support (DASS/academic advisor)? What can you do to support their needs in the rest of your course unit?

Examples

For placement students this might be a point you reach out to your students. If you say find yourself saying, *"You should be settling into your placement by now"*, consider the steps you can put in place to ensure you can know how students are doing, including:

- A named point of contact at the placement site as well as within the University, since students on placement can feel disconnected from the usual course unit support structures.
- An early, low-stakes check-in (e.g. a reflective log entry or short supervisor conversation) to surface any practical or wellbeing concerns before they build up.



05. The first assessment *continued*

Other actions to take at the mid point of the course unit:

Remind students of key course unit information:

- office hours and ways they can access support and feedback.
- key dates and deadlines coming up.

Revisit and remind students of any timelines and expectations about how they should be working that were shared at the start of the course unit.

Check with your students at the mid point of the course unit – this can take lots of formats:

- An informal mid-course unit survey.
- A mentimeter in class to ask how everyone is doing and to sign post resources for support.
- An email doing the same.
- A seminar about study skills.

“Constantly do check-ins with your students because life changes, generation changes, everything changes every year and something that worked last year not necessarily is going to work this year.”

Your check-in should prompt students to reflect on skills, confidence and workload/wellbeing, and clarify access to any learning adjustments across contexts (e.g. teaching or placements). Perhaps have a dedicated Q&A slot to identify pace, understanding, and unseen questions.

However you check in, if students provide feedback on your teaching or the course unit remember to close the feedback loop by letting them know how you will act on this.



Inclusive labs

If you work in a laboratory, students and colleagues in FSE have been building a toolkit to make lab work more inclusive. Tips they suggest include:

Prepare the space in advance: Set up equipment beforehand, remove unnecessary items, and reduce clutter and sensory distractions so students can focus on the task.

Make the lab easy to navigate: Use clear signage, maps, and visible key facilities (e.g. exits, toilets, help points) so students don't have to work out where to go.

Organise movement and workspace: Keep walkways clear, minimise congestion, and ensure students have enough space to work safely and comfortably.

Make adjustments visible and normalised: Clearly communicate available support (e.g. seating, lighting, quieter areas) and offer it proactively rather than waiting for students to ask.

Ensure clear communication and coordination: Brief staff, use clear and non-judgemental language, address common confusion collectively, and treat issues as design problems rather than individual deficits.

Plan for clarity and wellbeing during sessions: Monitor understanding, reduce repeated confusion, and build in breaks for longer sessions to manage fatigue and overload.

06. Another formative assessment

Why should I do another assessment when the marks “don’t count”?

This assessment adds to my stress and workloads, do I have to do it?

How does this task relate to the assessments where the marks *do* count?

Towards the end of the course unit students may be juggling competing deadlines and workloads for other course units, alongside any challenges in their wider lives beyond their degree, so it can be helpful at this stage to emphasise the value of formative assessments for checking their understanding and/or making initial steps with tasks that can inform their final assessment. The points around the first formative assessment apply just as much here.



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Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Once again explain the purpose and value of formative assessment, using plain English and avoiding jargon to make it clear to students what you want from them, when and why. Align formative tasks with learning outcomes and summative assessment expectations – and highlight this continuity to students.

Provide timely, constructive, specific and accessible feedback focusing on specific development and next steps.

Highlight that formative assessments offer a psychologically safe opportunity for practice which helps build confidence and reduce fear of failure. Make it clear to your students that formative assessments don’t secretly count towards the final mark.

Use this time to normalise help seeking behaviours and highlight support and developmental resources available to them (see next page).

“Optional assessment formats, but with recognition that too much choice can also create anxiety or confusion for some students”.



06. Another formative assessment *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help make the second formative deadline easier for students to navigate:

Formative assessment can be provided in different ways; MCQs or quizzes (which can be set to auto-mark), in-class presentations, or draft plans of summative assessment are common choices. You could also consider alternatives to a formative submission such as:

- Workshops.
- Guided peer learning sessions.
- Classroom tasks that focus on ensuring understand of marking criteria and assessment feedback through practical tasks.

This is a good time to encourage students to engage in reflective practice around their learning, and to encourage them to draw connections between previous assessment and feedback they have received. This [My Learning Essentials course unit](#) may be helpful.

The formative assessment also offers an excellent opportunity to remind students of helpful resources and support structures such as:

- Support offered by DASS for students who might need to get registered, including their ["Do I have dyslexia" support](#).
- Resources to help with the development of academic English provided by the University's Centre for Academic English.
- Resources to help with academic skills development, such as the Library's [My Learning Essentials resources](#). You could ask students to undertake an asynchronous module as part of their formative work, or contact the Library for bespoke content to embed in your Canvas pages.
- Support for students who struggle with perfectionism, anxiety, or confidence such as these [wellbeing resources](#).

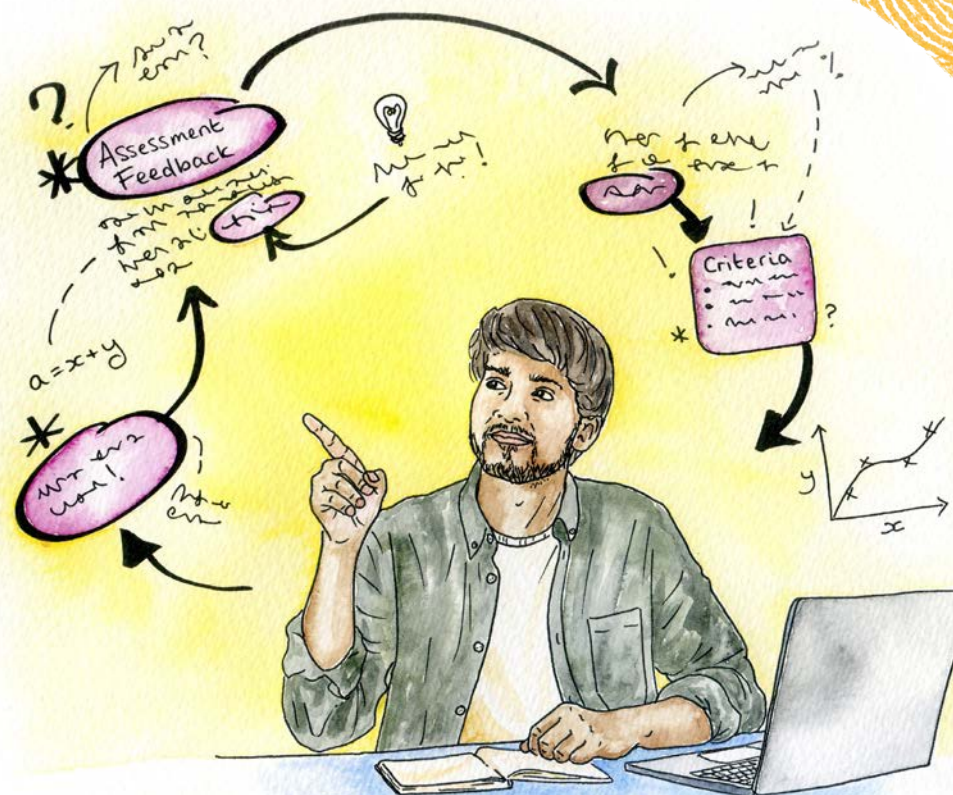
The formative assessment is also a good time to remind students of ways they can contact the course unit team with any questions.

Examples



Peer & assessment practice:
Use peer review/marking against clear criteria to build confidence, critical skills, and assessment literacy.

Formative run-through:
Provide a low-stakes 'dry run' case presentation or practice exam question with targeted feedback to strengthen technique before final assessment.



"You're never going to get everybody thinking the same way."

07. Moving towards the final assessment

What do I need to do in this work? What preparation is needed?

How does my previous feedback apply to this assessment?

How can I get support or help now?

As the module moves towards its final assessment students may feel understandably anxious, particularly if the final assessment carries a high weighting of the grades in the course unit (although, as this resource discussed earlier, it is good practice to avoid this). Simultaneously, student attendance and engagement may drop off so it is important to provide information about the final assessment in a timely manner and in several formats.



Representation Matters



Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Provide clear, specific, and explicit information on the distinct purpose of this assessment, what it will involve and what preparation is needed. Ensure the marking criteria are also clear and available.

Help students understand how to apply previous feedback and insights from formative work to this assessment.

Assess understanding of content through a Q&A session.

Review marking criteria and ensure it makes due consideration for all students.

Check the accessibility and inclusiveness of the assessment resources, materials, and brief, by which we mean:

- **Accessibility:** Use jargon free English and ensure the assessment task is clear. Ensure any verbal instructions are also written.
- **Inclusivity:** Avoid stereotypes and avoid normative images (see the work of the [Reframing Stopford Project](#) for inspiration).
- **Optionality:** If possible, embed choice for students with assessment questions, format, or content.

"With the accent sometimes they don't understand you, so it's more complicated to communicate."

"I don't think it's in any way fair to be...to have ambiguous language, mark schemes."



07. Moving towards the final assessment *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help students in their final assessment for the course unit:

This is a good time to highlight to your students the Library's [exam and assessment support](#).

Other questions that might arise from your students at this time include:

???

- This unexpected issue/emergency has come up/my health has declined/etc, what can I do?
- Do my DASS adjustments apply to this assessment?
- My DASS report hasn't come through yet, what can I do?
- What happens if I need to resit?

Local arrangements for mitigating circumstances, resits and the specificities of DASS support plans means that this guide can't provide an easy answer to these questions but your local programme team will be able to advise.

The final assessment can be a challenging time.

We suggest sharing all of the resources in the Additional Information box directly with your students in a number of formats so that they have core information available easily.



Self-Assessment Checklist

Our project student partners have compiled this helpful list you might want to share with your students to help them in preparing their assessed work:

Before submission (Humanities):

- ✓ Am I within the word limit of the assignment?
- ✓ Is each paragraph relevant to the argument?
- ✓ Is there a broad understanding of the cultural background of the topic?
- ✓ Have I referenced my sources according to the appropriate guide and in the correct referencing style?
- ✓ Have I reviewed and applied previous feedback?
- ✓ Have I proofread my final submission to avoid grammatical errors?
- ✓ Have I followed appropriate layout and formatting?

Before submission (FSE):

- ✓ Have I shown my working and stated any assumptions clearly?
- ✓ Are my units and significant figures consistent throughout?
- ✓ Have I checked my submission against the file format and portal requirements?
- ✓ Have I reviewed and applied previous feedback?
- ✓ If code is involved, does it run without errors and is it commented clearly?

Before submission (FBMH):

- ✓ Have I followed anonymisation requirements where a case study or patient details are involved?
- ✓ Have I checked my submission against the relevant competency framework or marking domains?
- ✓ Have I reviewed and applied previous feedback, including from placement supervisors?

08. Post teaching

What can I learn from this feedback?

What does this feedback mean?

How does my mark relate to the marking criteria?

At the end of the course unit there are a few things to consider; how can you use the course unit feedback that your students provide to develop the next iteration of the course? And how can you communicate that you have acted on that feedback to your students (both now and in future cohorts)? How can you help make things clearer for future students? For example, can you ask students from this cohort to provide some brief recordings or a few written lines of advice for future students who will take the course?

This is also the time that students will be receiving their own feedback from the final assessment, and this is crucial to their academic development. It is through feedback that students identify their missteps, consolidate their learning, and develop the skills required to achieve higher marks in future assessments. While it is vital for feedback to be released on a timely basis, it must also be detailed and comprehensive. In the context of student growth, "more is more." To ensure feedback is equitable and useful, markers must be specific about where marks were lost, provide clear justification for the grade, and explicitly tie their comments back to the module's core learning objectives.

"I've spent most of my degree fighting the system instead of studying."



Representation Matters



Crucial things to consider at this stage:

Use plain English.

Focus feedback on the work submitted, not the student.

Use an example from the student's work, even if relatively common or generic points.

Name the marker clearly (and where appropriate, the first moderator).

Explain key terms, rather than assume a uniform interpretation e.g. be explicit what you mean when you say "be more professional" or "too descriptive".

Align feedback directly to the marking criteria with clear wording and examples from the students' work.

Ensure information for contacting the lecturer/marker is clear upfront and re-stated during the feedback process.

08. Post teaching *continued*

Here are some other things to consider to help students get the most from their feedback:

Feedback should be detailed and comprehensive rather than brief.

Restate the purpose of assessment in feedback.

Be explicit about:

- Mistakes to be avoided.
- What the student did well.
- Suggestions to implement for future assessments.

Feed forward! By which we mean, state how the student can use or apply the feedback in future work.

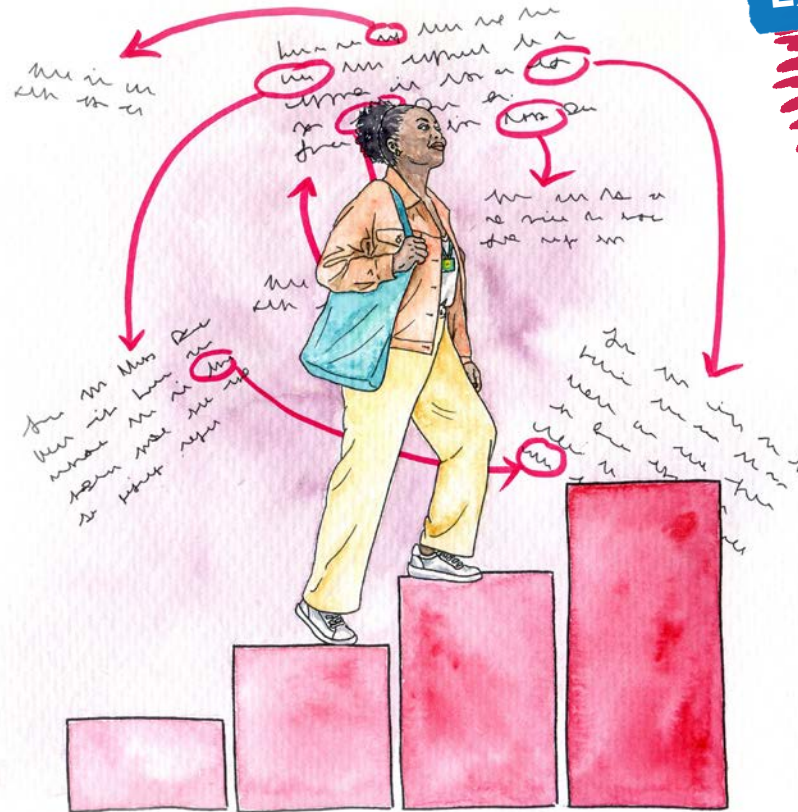
Flag general mistakes made across the cohort to the whole cohort and emphasise what improvements can be made.

Relate feedback to module learning objectives.

Focus on the content of the work, rather than potentially exclusionary criteria such as eye contact, manner of speaking, spelling and grammar.

Avoid vague comments such as "Unnecessary", "???", "Not relevant" or "Can be improved" with explicit instructions and what mistake has been made.

Focus on key areas that relate to the marking criteria and the purpose of the specific assessment, e.g. not spelling and grammar unless this is core to the assessment.



Examples

Examples of general feedback and how to make it more specific:

"Your clinical reasoning needs further development."

Specific reference to the point in the case or consultation where reasoning diverged from expected practice, with an explanation of the expected reasoning pathway.

"Professionalism and communication could be improved."

Concrete, behavioural examples (specific phrasing, structure, or approach) rather than a general comment, since "professionalism" can otherwise feel vague or subjective.

Additional questions students may have at this time (consider how you can pre-empt these)

???

Can I contact my lecturer now the course unit has finished (especially after second semester assessments)?

How can I improve?

How can I use this feedback if my next module uses a different assessment format (e.g., an exam instead of an essay)?

Who marked my work?

If I don't understand my feedback, can I appeal my grade or ask for a re-evaluation?

How can I check I've understood my feedback?

"Better feedback for sure! Detailed informative feedback so I know what I need to improve."

Conclusions and next steps

This resource follows the linear journey of an inclusive course unit, with the aim that whenever you pick it up within your own teaching there might be simple tips and tricks that you can apply to make your teaching and assessment more inclusive and representative of the diverse body of students that we are so lucky to have at the University of Manchester. But the reality is that your teaching is likely to be iterative; things you try one year can be developed and built for the next iteration of the course.

The suggestions and advice in this resource provide a starting point but if you would like more advice and support in developing your inclusive teaching and learning you can contact your Faculty's Teaching Academy, and the [Institute of Teaching and Learning](#).

If you want to read more about decolonising the curriculum, we warmly invite you to review the Student Union's [decolonising guide](#).



Mini-glossary of terms

As noted above, there are two excellent resources that you might want to direct students to (or to visit yourself) to understand some key academic language. These are:

The Library Student Team's ["University Jargon Decoded"](#) resource

The University Centre for Academic English's [Academic Phrasebank](#)

However, there are some terms that we use throughout this resource that we thought it would be helpful to clarify here. They are:

Course unit (also referred to as modules) – these are distinct units with a name that run as part of one or more degree programmes.

Formative Assessment – informal assessment that is an opportunity to practice skills and get feedback, without a grade that is formally recorded towards the course unit overall grade

Summative Assessment – formal assessment for which the grade counts towards the overall grade for the course unit/year/degree.

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The *Representation Matters* project takes an explicitly participatory action research (PAR) approach which means that it "prioritizes the value of experiential knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems, and for envisioning and implementing alternatives. PAR involves the participation and leadership of those people experiencing issues, who take action to produce emancipatory social change, through conducting systematic research to generate new knowledge" (Cornish et al. 2023). To this end, the development of the resource would not have been possible without all of the University of Manchester students and staff who kindly gave their time and shared their experiences that informed this resource, and without the work of the Project's student partners Alayna Kondamudi, William Odumosu and Carl Kulimushi. We are extremely grateful to you all, thank you!

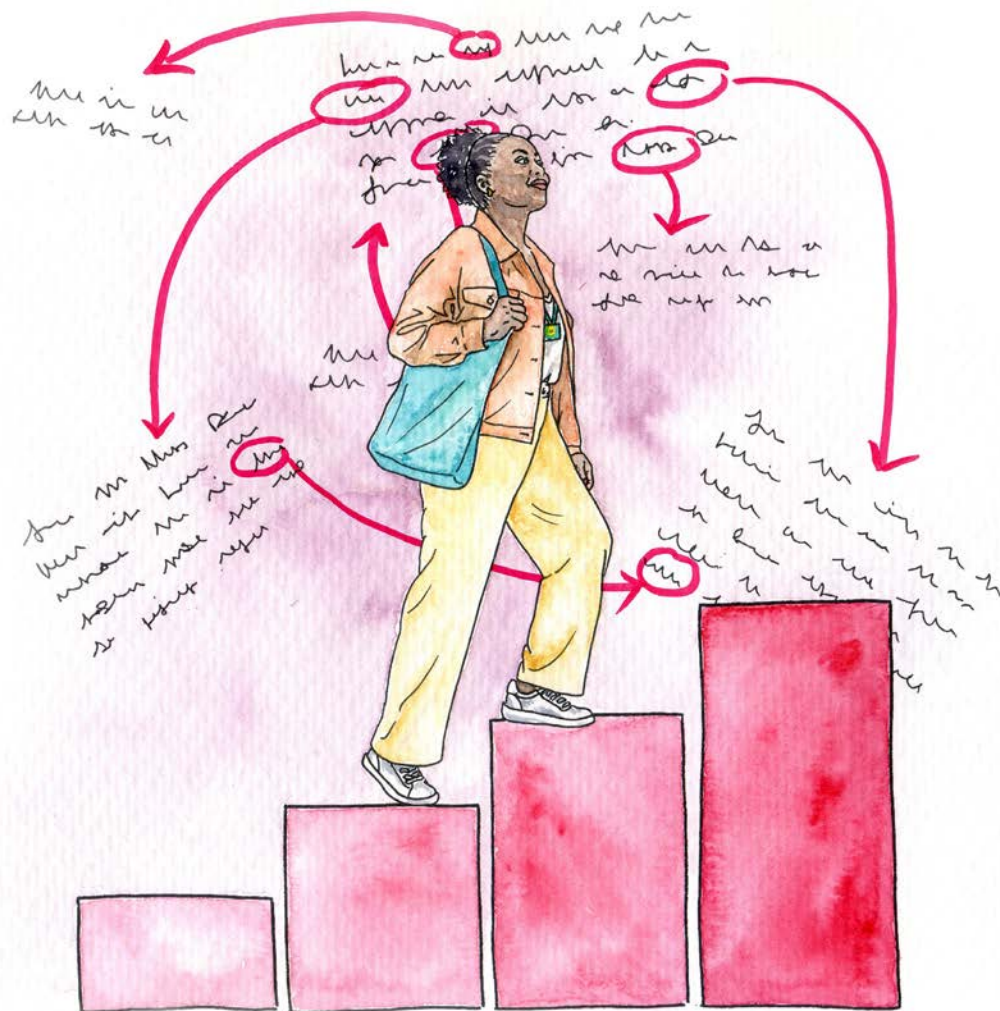
The experiences of the students who contributed to this project are expressed in this resource through examples, quotes, and most crucially through the brilliant art work of creative practitioners Domenique Brouwers, Stacey Coughlin, Dr Pen Mendonca and Raluca-Elena Valcescu, based on their observations at the workshops. We are deeply grateful to all of the creative team for so thoughtfully capturing and expressing the complex student experiences that have informed this work. We are also indebted to Adam Chard (Croatian Design) for their clarity of vision in marshalling all of the many ideas, voices and visions to make this clear and beautiful resource.

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This project was approved by the University of Manchester Ethics Committee (ref 2025-23917-43409) in November 2025.

Image: Collage created during the workshops held during the making of this resource.





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