



Assessment Strategy 2022-25

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Vision

1. The vision of this strategy is that Northeastern University London (the University) will be a national leader in authentic and inclusive assessment of and for experiential learning.

Strategy Principles

2. The University strategy is to develop a diverse repertoire of authentic and inclusive assessments of and for experiential learning. The University views assessment as a tool for learning, not only a post hoc measurement of learning. Both summative and formative assessments can give students valuable feedback about their learning and motivate them to continue learning. For these reasons, our assessments will prioritise the application of knowledge and skills to public and professional settings, thus engaging students in, and preparing them for, employment, citizenship, and personal fulfilment.
3. This assessment strategy reflects the rapid growth and diversification of the University. It is in line with and at the intersections of the University's Strategic Plan's focus on agility and innovation, experiential learning, and employability. It supports our Teaching and Learning Strategy, which calls for a focus on experiential and active learning.
4. The strategy is based upon the following principles:
 - 4.1. Assessment must be driven in the first instance by the imperatives of teaching and learning.
 - 4.2. Assessment must be, in accordance with the OfS condition of ongoing registration B4, effective, valid, and reliable, and designed to ensure the quality and credibility of the award.
 - 4.3. Assessment must be aligned to course learning outcomes, and beyond that foster the development of certain student 'dispositions,' central to our overarching educational strategy.
 - 4.4. The assessments and wider teaching and learning strategy do not conflate the "real world" with the "world of work," but rather consider the student holistically, paying equal attention to employability, wellbeing, and self-actualization.
 - 4.5. Assessment and its administration should be agile and keep pace with the University's growth and evolving research and best practice in this area.
 - 4.6. Assessment must be guided by research and best practices and supported by new internal processes which integrate the

expertise of the faculty and Quality Team. The University will empower all to innovate in this space.

5. The University views the strengthening and broadening of the assessment repertoire as critical to its overarching vision for the University; to its growth and integration with Northeastern University (Northeastern); and to its own and students' desire for flexibility, relevance, and impact in the world. By focusing its attention on what it asks students to do and to make, and how those activities relate to activities in the broader world, The University positions its students to grow holistically and to succeed in that world.

Authentic and Inclusive Assessments

Authentic

6. An assessment is “authentic” when it evaluates students' knowledge and skills as they complete tasks that either have analogues in, or actually occur in, public and professional settings. An assessment is “inclusive” when it is free from bias and culturally responsive, allowing all students equitable opportunities to learn and to demonstrate their learning. Ideally, authentic, inclusive assessments are both assessments of learning and assessments for learning—that is, assessments that measure learning and that promote learning through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment.
7. Beyond the obvious benefit of involving students in learning that is relevant to their lives as workers, citizens, and community members, authentic tasks and assessments promote student motivation; improve student achievement; deepen student knowledge; condition knowledge for future use (transfer); facilitate self-directed learning; and reduce breaches of academic integrity by requiring original, observable productions. Student self-assessment, viewed as a critical component of effective authentic assessment, has also been shown through rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental studies to improve academic performance and to promote self-regulated learning.
8. Authentic assessments align with key University priorities, starting with experiential learning. Consider the following experiential learning activities: putting on a performance, reading, exhibition, or moot court for a classroom or external audience; completing career service activities; presenting a proposal to an industry or community organisation; undergoing a mock or actual interview, writing and submitting a letter to a cultural institution; writing and executing code; completing a company-embedded project; designing a model for a product; developing a marketing plan; crafting a policy paper for a think tank or municipal body;

completing a co-op or other work-based learning experience; performing clinical procedures; building a digital archive. These activities have at least two things in common: they all involve doing or making something that is either analogous to or an instance of what happens in public and professional settings; and students' performance of them will be woefully underrepresented by traditional exams and essays. The University needs assessments that evaluate these "real-world" activities in "real-world" ways. The University needs authentic assessments.

Inclusive

9. Authentic assessments also align with inclusivity. The OfS has introduced Key Performance Measure 4 to gauge universities' efforts to become more inclusive. And although the degree awarding gap, for example, is the result of complex and multifactorial issues, institutions' continuous efforts to make assessments more inclusive plays an important role in narrowing it. When well-designed, authentic assessments affirm and engage student differences by giving students opportunities to meet learning goals in ways that make sense for them. In the completion of a workplace-based assessment of a team project, for instance, students can draw on their individual strengths and address their challenges to play different roles on the team. Similarly, in the production of a dramatic performance, some students might focus on acting, while others would be more comfortable contributing as writers or directors. As long as students have the support and opportunity to meet the learning goals for the course, they can do so in somewhat different ways. Furthermore, our assessments will promote authentic involvement on part of the student, allowing them to grow holistically as a student and a person in the world.
10. In this way, authentic assessments align with a third University value: personalisation. As the examples in the previous paragraph suggest, even within a single course or project, students will have some flexibility in how they meet learning goals. The goals and assessment methods must be transparent, reliable, valid, fair, and consistently applied—but the student experience is personalised. This brings us back to experiential learning: No two students will have the identical experience, whether they are completing a clinical exercise, writing code, or writing and submitting an op-ed. Assessment will be positioned in such a way as to allow the student to bring their entire cultural wealth into play and to build on it. Authentic assessments will support our vision of education as a societal good.
11. The University believes that a renewed focus on inclusive and authentic assessment will further strengthen the overall quality of our provision. As stated in last year's OfS review, choosing between inclusivity and authenticity, and quality and robustness is not a zero-sum game:

“Improving equality of opportunity without maintaining quality and standards will not lead to positive student outcomes. Likewise, maintaining quality and standards without improving equality of opportunity means excluding students who would stand to benefit in a fairer system.”

12. In the University’s vision, assessments are of and for learning. And “if we truly believe in the power of the idea behind assessment for learning and the importance of assessment for students’ future lives, then faculty must think of the relationship between assessment and the students as whole people, socially situated.” This means designing assessments for learning, as much as for employability and self-actualization. Numerous studies show that student attainment increases when students are able to establish an authentic connection with what they learn.

Conclusion

13. In summary, this Assessment Strategy is therefore instrumental in meeting the OfS’s four primary regulatory objectives:
 - 13.1. ensuring that students succeed in and progress from HE;
 - 13.2. receive a high quality academic experience;
 - 13.3. are able to progress into employment or further study;
 - 13.4. receive value for money.
14. Much, though not all, of what is discussed here has been embedded in HE for some time. However, being part of Northeastern, a university which has been at the forefront of innovation in experiential and authentic teaching and learning, presents a unique opportunity to establish the University as a national leader in authentic and inclusive assessment of and for experiential learning. Naturally, the University’s approach will reflect its distinctive, though complementary, educational vision and the different constraints the University, as an UK HE provider, work under. In the long run, this new Assessment Strategy will therefore be an occasion for the University to feed expertise and knowledge back into the NU network.

Operationalisation of the Strategy

15. This Assessment Strategy must be operationalised as efficiently as possible, with maximum support and benefit to students and faculty.
16. Faculty members who believe that the best methods for assessing student learning are through exams and essays for class may continue to use

them. The University recognises that a timed exam can itself be an authentic assessment if it involves simulations or similar activities.

17. At the same time, faculty members, especially those implementing or extending experiential learning opportunities for their students, are encouraged to explore alternative forms of assessment that align with learning outcomes and assigned tasks. There is no “one right way” to assess; faculties may use any assessments that meet the goals outlined in this strategy and that comport with University and national regulations.
18. The University anticipates a growing culture of assessment in which faculty members learn with and from each other how best to assess student learning. To that end, a variety of resources will be made available to faculties for designing and conducting authentic and inclusive assessments. These will include Experience/Education sessions and an Assessment Toolkit to be housed on Canvas.

Version History

Title: Assessment Strategy				
Approved by: Academic Board				
Version Number	Date Approved	Date Published	Owner	Proposed Next Review Date
1.0	July 2022	August 2022	Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning	June 2025
Referenced documents	University Strategy; Teaching and Learning Strategy			
External Reference Point(s)	Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England			

Annex I: Examples of Authentic Assessment Methods

The challenge of assessing experiential learning is that experience is by its nature fleeting, ephemeral—and therefore difficult to double mark or moderate. Fortunately, educators and researchers at all levels have devised methods of documentation and evaluation that allow us to conduct rigorous assessments that are arguably, in some cases, more valid and reliable than traditional assessments. Instruments and methods such as learning logs, digital recordings, observation journals, checklists, surveys or questionnaires, user notes, interviews, digital portfolios, and rubrics, can be better aligned with what actually needs to be measured, and they can involve the judgments of multiple stakeholders, including students.

Example 1: Assessing Performances

Brief review sheets, tagged to one or more learning goals of the course, are distributed to, and collected from audience members of a student dramatic performance. Students complete a self-assessment form. The performance is recorded. The faculty member considers the results of the reviews, the self-assessments, and the recorded performance against clear and detailed marking criteria, arriving at a summative mark with appropriate documentation for double marking or moderation.

Example 2: Assessing Programming

Student-generated programming is assessed first and foremost on whether it works as intended. “Create a program using R” is only one learning outcome of the course. Another is to hone problem-solving skills—so students keep a problem/solution notebook as they work on their scripts. A third outcome is to learn how to solicit and use feedback from users—so students construct and distribute a short user survey to people who interact with their program (this could go to classmates, intended future users, or actual users). These products—the R script and program, the notebook, and the user survey—are evaluated against clear marking criteria/rubric.

Example 3: Assessing Class Participation

A clear rubric with detailed performance-level descriptions lays out expectations for each mark band. The faculty member keeps a simple checklist (with space for comments on extraordinary performance of some sort) to track student participation. Each student keeps a more detailed participation log, in which they record their participation and their reflections on their contributions to the course. Faculty and

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students meet around mid-semester for a formative feedback session and an indicative mark is assigned. Summative marks are assigned and moderated at the end of the semester by putting the students' participation log and the faculty member's checklists up against the rubric.