



# **Assessment Preparation Guidance for Academic Staff**

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<b>Other documents referenced</b>	
<b>Related documents</b>	University Assessment Regulations Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate

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V1.0	7.08.2014	G&QE	First published version (previously included as separate sections of <i>Assessment &amp; Graduation Processes</i> )
V2.0	15.09.2016	Academic Quality and Development	Guidance related to the permitted use of reference lists added.
V3.0	Pending approval	Academic Quality and Development	
V3.1	01.09.2023	Quality Assurance and Enhancement	Inclusion of Senate approved Percentage Marking Framework.

## Assessment Preparation Guidance for Academic Staff

### Notes of Guidance to Academic Staff on Information to be provided to Students to Assist Their Preparation for Assessments

The University has approved a Percentage Marking Framework, where marks are awarded based on student(s) demonstrating ability, skills and/or behaviours across some of all of the five SCQF characteristics. The Framework is included at Appendix 1, with further guidance for staff available via the [GCU Learning and Teaching Hub](#).

#### *Preamble*

Assessments at Glasgow Caledonian University may take a variety of formats and instruments of assessment may include seen elements which have been approved through normal channels as part of the institution's ongoing procedures for module approval.

It is anticipated that by adhering to the following practices, the risk of inappropriate information on the content of unseen assessments being provided unintentionally and/or informally to students should be minimised if not entirely removed.

Paramount within the guidance is that, for all modules at GCU, everything which a student needs to know about an assessment should be provided in a written format by the module leader. Thereafter, no further information should be divulged verbally by staff except where this is a re-iteration of what is provided in the written format. It is important that information given to all students taking a particular assessment is standardised. No individual student, or group of students, should be given any information which may provide, or appear to provide, an advantage over any other student(s). It is important to note that feedback on work (especially coursework) should not be considered as giving an advantage in this context.

*The following guidelines constitute the bounds of acceptable information which should be provided to all students undertaking modules at Glasgow Caledonian University:*

- Clear details on the format and structure of any formal coursework or examination paper forming part of the overall assessment for a module must be made available to students either within module handbooks or in notes of guidance distributed to all students on that module - such guidance should clearly indicate the weighting attached to different elements of the paper and, for formal examinations, how many questions will be derived from each distinct area of the syllabus - **Under no circumstances should the specific topics of individual questions in a formal unseen examination be divulged to students.**
- A general guide to the marking criteria which will be used by all staff when marking coursework or examinations for a particular module should be provided within module handbooks or in notes of guidance. The marking criteria should provide clear guidance to students on what is expected. This will help to ensure transparency and consistency within an effective Quality Assurance framework.
- All students should be made aware of the different types of responses which may be required to individual questions, e.g. short response, case study, essay etc, and also the different styles of responses which may be required, e.g. give an account of, discuss, relate, compare and contrast, describe, write an essay entitled etc.

- For existing modules where the content of the assessment is consistent with previous years, students should be directed towards examples of past papers or previously issued courseworks as a guide as to what may reasonably be expected in terms of assessment. These should be provided on GCU Learn.
- For new modules being delivered for the first time or modules where the content has been updated, students should be made aware of the changes and given exemplars of the types of examination questions which may be set along with clear guidance on the structure and format of any coursework or formal examination papers along the lines indicated above.
- If students are allowed to bring resources (eg reference lists) into the assessment venue the nature of this resource should be clearly defined to the students and to the invigilators of the assessment. All such paper based resources must be typed. Where a reference list is allowed to be submitted by the candidate during the examination as part of their submission, this has to be typed, with no handwritten material on it and must be no more than a double sided A4 sheet.

### **Guidance Note on Assessment Loading**

**Note: At undergraduate, the norm is 20 credit modules and at Masters the norm is 15 credit modules and this has been used as the basis for the tariff for both courseworks and examinations. Variations on this should scale the loading appropriately. The tariff should thus be applied flexibly to modules with higher or lower credit weighting; for example, a 10 credit module may need slightly more than a linear scaling to half of that of a 20 credit module.**

Normally there will be no more than two discrete assessments in a 15 or 20 credit module. It is important to note that each individual coursework should count as a discrete assessment and large courseworks should not be created as “shells” for a group of unrelated smaller courseworks. This should not be taken as precluding the development of a cumulative piece of coursework (eg a portfolio or set of lab reports).

As far as possible, assessment workload should be considered and balanced across a level of programme and form part of the programme level design.

The following guidance assumes written essay type assessments or examinations and for assessments with a mainly numeric basis or which are assessed in different ways (eg viva examinations, observed class tests etc) then the effort required should be comparable.

Whilst it is recognised that it is the learning outcome which dictates the assessment, staff designing modules should be aware of the potential overload issue when setting the outcomes and when determining the balance between the different components which contribute to the total assessment for the module. There may also be the requirements of a professional body to take into consideration, for example, the need to assess both practical/clinical and academic elements within even a 10 credit module.

## Written Examinations (Including Class Tests)

Module Credit	Proportion of total module assessment	Suggested duration of examination
20	100%	2-3 Hours
20	70%	2-3 Hours
20	50% and under	2 Hours
15	100%	2-3 Hours
15	70%	2-3 Hours
15	50% and under	2 Hours

## Coursework

The coursework loading guidance assumes written essay submission. It is acknowledged that the guidance on coursework assignments will not apply in many situations e.g. laboratory reports, programming exercises, presentations, vivas, blogs. Staff are encouraged to interpret the tariff flexibly when applying them to other forms of assessment.

For coursework which includes information presented in a non-textual format (diagrams, tables, figures, images, etc.) then if the creation of non-textual material is a key skill being assessed (and is linked to the intended learning outcomes), as opposed to an element of presentation, the workload in doing so should be considered when deciding on a required word limit. It is probable that such coursework may have a lower word limit, possibly even a substantially lower word limit where the non-textual component dominates the learning outcomes. In such cases it is essential that it is made clear to the students how the quality of the non-textual components contributes to their marks.

Word count limits are based on individual assessments. Group assessments should normally have a word limit less than the cumulative total for the individual word limit for the % weighting.

For both courseworks and dissertations, work that is greater than 10% over the word limit specified to the student, 10% of the mark awarded should be deducted. For other forms of assessment a different limit may be appropriate (e.g. file size).

It is essential that the limits on the submission (e.g. word limit) and the associated penalties are made explicit to the student as part of the specification of the coursework.

Module Credit	Proportion of total module assessment	Suggested upper limit
20 3000 words or equivalent at L1 and L2	100%	3000 words or equivalent at SCQF Level 7 and 8 4000 words or equivalent at SCQF Level 9 and 10
20	70%	2000 words or equivalent at SCQF Level 7 and 8 4000 words or equivalent at SCQF Level 9 and 10
20	50% and under	1500 words or equivalent at SCQF Level 7 and 8 2000 words or equivalent at SCQF Level 9 and 10
15	100%	4000 words or equivalent
15	70%	3000 words or equivalent
15	50% and under	2000 words or equivalent

### Oral Assessment

To allow students sufficient time to successfully cover the content, individual presentations should not normally be less than 5 minutes and should not normally exceed 20 minutes. Group presentations may be longer than individual presentations, but would not normally exceed 25-30 minutes. These figures are guidance only and it is possible that there will be modules where the dominant or sole form of assessment is the oral assessment. In such cases a significantly greater time may be appropriate to fully assess the outcomes.

### Honours and Masters level Project/Dissertation

Module credit	Suggested upper limit
20	up to 5000 words or equivalent at SCQF level 10 up to 7000 words or equivalent at SCQF level 11
40	up to 10000 words or equivalent at SCQF level 10 up to 14000 words or equivalent at SCQF level 11
60	up to 15000 words or equivalent at SCQF level 10 up to 20,000 words or equivalent at SCQF level 11

### Digital Assessment

Digital assessment loading should be considered in line with the university's [Digital Assessment Policy](#) available at the following location:

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/academicqualityanddevelopment/academicquality/regulationsandpolicies/>

## GCU Percentage Marking Framework

The University has an established percentage marking framework. Percentage marks are awarded based on the student(s) demonstrating the ability, skills and/or behaviours across some or all of the five SCQF characteristics, as specified in the module descriptor and defined in learning outcomes. Broadly, the SCQF characteristics can be summarised as:

- Subject-specific knowledge and understanding
- Subject-specific application of knowledge, skills and understanding
- Generic cognitive skills in evaluation, analysis, synthesis and integration of complex information
- Communication, ICT and numeracy skills
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others

The SCQF characteristics for module assessments need to reflect the appropriate SCQF level and, where applicable, need to be contextualised to reflect the subject, module and assessment description.

The framework covers Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate study, as follows:

### Percentage Marking Framework for Undergraduate Study

Honours Classification Guide (for undergraduate students)	Evaluation	Percentage Range	Description
1 <sup>st</sup> Class	Exceptional	90 - 100	Demonstrates <b>exceptional and consistently excellent</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristic(s) with <b>no weaknesses</b> .
		80 - 89	Demonstrates <b>exceptional or consistently excellent</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristic(s), with <b>few weaknesses</b> .
	Excellent	70 – 79	Demonstrates <b>mostly excellent</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics.
2i Class	Very Good	60 - 69	Demonstrates <b>overall very good</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics.
2ii Class	Good	50 – 59	Demonstrates <b>overall good</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics
3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Satisfactory	40 - 49	Demonstrates <b>overall satisfactory</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics
Not applicable	Marginal Fail	30 -39	Demonstrates <b>overall poor</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics with <b>some satisfactory</b> elements
	Clear Fail	< 30	Demonstrates <b>overall poor</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics with <b>no satisfactory</b> elements
	Non-Submission	0	<b>Non submission</b>

## Percentage Marking Framework for Taught Postgraduate Study.

Award	Evaluation	Percentage Range	Description
With Distinction	Exceptional	90 - 100	Demonstrates <b>exceptional and consistently excellent</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristic(s) with <b>no weaknesses</b> .
		80 - 89	Demonstrates <b>exceptional</b> or <b>consistently excellent</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristic(s) with <b>few weaknesses</b> .
	Excellent	70 – 79	Demonstrates <b>mostly excellent</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics.
With Merit	Very Good	65 - 69	Demonstrates <b>overall very good</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics.
Pass	Good	60 - 64	Demonstrates <b>overall good</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics
	Satisfactory	50 – 59	Demonstrates <b>overall satisfactory</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics
Not Applicable	Marginal Fail	40 - 49	Demonstrates <b>overall poor</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics with <b>some satisfactory</b> elements
	Clear Fail	< 39	Demonstrates <b>overall poor</b> ability, skills and behaviours across specified characteristics with <b>no satisfactory</b> elements
	Non Submission	-	<b>Non Submission</b>