# Teaching, Learning and Assessment Guidance

**Introduction and Purpose**

This document sets out the key information that should be included within the department’s teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) overview. It draws upon the Office for Students [Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/the-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/) and Conditions of Registration, the [QAA Quality Code](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code), CMA information as well as guidance from Organisational Development, Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service, and Technology Enhanced Learning teams.

As detailed in various policies, including the University’s [assessment policies](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/exams-and-assessment/assessment-and-marking-policies), departments should have an assessment strategy for each course, or set of courses, for approval in the annual monitoring process and periodic review of courses. Departments are asked to provide documents which reflect on approaches to learning and teaching in periodic reviews.

Pulling these areas together provides a document that can be shared across the department, as well as being used in internal and external annual and periodic reviews.

**Aim**

The aim is for this to become a working document, updated at each level of provision on an annual basis via the Curriculum Update.

This could be used to:

* **form the basis for discussions within the department**, and during quality enhancement meetings, to formulate teaching, learning and assessment plans as well as embedding new initiatives for future academic years
* **support academic members of staff** in designing, developing, and delivering new courses and modules which are accessible to all students
* **provide a standardised approach** to learning outcomes to ensure that they are at the appropriate level and volume of credits
* **assist with internal/external review or accreditation requirements** since it could be referred to without having to create something new
* **set the scene for the annual Curriculum Update** by encouraging departments to consider, review and update the TLA as the first step of planning changes to curriculum. Would enable more efficient approval of changes by the Faculty Deans and the Quality and Academic Development team and would also assist with compliance with CMA and other external regulations.

**What to cover**

The outline should cover:

* each level of provision (undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research)
* all modes of delivery (including online/blended study)
* both assessment and reassessment.

**What to consider**

The outline should reflect upon [University strategy](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/governance/university-strategic-plan) and policies:

* the University’s [Education Strategy](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/education-strategy-2019-28.pdf)
* the [Education Action Plan](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/eap-2024-25.pdf)
* the [Research Action Plan](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/rap-2024-25.pdf)
* associated [assessment and marking policies](https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/exams-and-coursework/assessment-and-marking-policies)
* Handbook for SP and RSPBs including the [Code of Practice for Research Vivas](https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/governance/policies)
* any other areas of focus for the University in particular years (e.g., NSS action plans).
* Departments should also consider the information and support provided to students throughout.

**Annual Curriculum Update**

Once a TLA has been populated, Departments **must check and update their TLA via Curriculum Update** as part of the annual cycle of updates each year and this should be one of the first areas departments review.

The TLA Overview should represent and account for the changes that will be requested through the Update cycle. It is a critically important step to complete as the TLA Overview will be sent to every student at the end of the Update.

**Teaching, Learning and Assessment outline structure**

The Teaching, Learning, and Assessment outline is divided into 6 sections, for each level of provision – undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research. It should detail the current year’s approach and reflect on the department’s plans for the next academic year.

**Please note:** All departments who are due for Periodic Review during the next academic year and have not previously completed the full TLA, are required to complete all sections. All other departments must check and update their TLA via Curriculum Update as part of the annual cycle of updates each year.

1. **Teaching, learning and assessment overview 2025-26**

Brief overview for prospective students/current students:

* Details about the general level of experience or status of staff involved in teaching
* Overall methods of assessment (for example, a combination of exams, coursework, or practical assessments)
* Overall expected workload/contact hours (e.g., frequency/duration of lectures and seminars)

This information is core and aligns with CMA requirements. This will be published to prospective and current students and will appear on Curriculum Notifications.

1. **Alignment to the University’s strategic plan**

* An overview of how teaching, learning and assessment align and continue to take due regards to the University’s strategic plan and its supporting Education and Research Strategies and sub-strategies (for example, equality, diversity and inclusivity, environmental/sustainability considerations, research skills, and collaborative work, use of learning technology).

Strategic objective: *To deliver consistent education excellence in the rapidly evolving digital world of the 21st century by reviewing our use of learning technology, focused on the need to integrate with and complement our curriculum and the development of our learning and teaching spaces.*

*Strategic objective: To deliver a transformational education by encouraging impactful and innovative approaches, using learning from research (including pedagogical research) and national and international experiences, facilitating the meaningful dissemination and adoption of good and best practice.*

Strategic objective: *To foster our learning community and a sense of belonging by developing our curriculum and assessment methods to include activities based around shared ownership, group activity and collaborative work.*

Strategic objective: *To deliver our commitment to supporting every student from every background to achieve success, enabling equality of opportunity across sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, gender assignment, religion, and socio-economic group.*

Strategic objective: *To enable all our students to articulate and apply their research skills during and beyond their studies by reviewing and developing our curricula to incorporate a clearly articulated developmental trajectory for research skills across all courses and levels, which is explicit and visible to students.*

1. **Teaching and learning**
   1. Facilities and resources, which should include:

* A description of the learning and teaching accommodation provided, including the facilities available to research students and apprentices (e.g., office space, equipment, common room).
* A brief summary of the types of learning materials available to students (e.g., library resources, reading lists; hard copy or web-based learning materials, VLE and IT facilities), and what information students are provided with.
* Information on how the department ensures that equipment, materials, and accommodation provided for learning are current, are maintained in a safe condition and are fully accessible.
* Where there are health and safety risks associated with the learning activity, how departments ensure staff, students and external providers understand their responsibilities and receive suitable information, instruction, and training; including information about what records are kept. This should include reference to work-based learning and how the University’s health and safety standards for work placements are met.
  1. Teaching and learning approach, which should include:
* A summary of the current teaching and learning methods for each level of provision (e.g., seminars/lecture format, workshops/discussion groups, online / face-to-face delivery).
* Information on how the teaching and learning methods enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
* A summary of the academic support available to students, including Personal Tutor activity and tripartite meetings for apprentices
* How good practice is shared among those involved in delivering the course.
* A summary of any changes planned for the next year.

1. **Assessment**

* An outline of the department’s approach to assessment methods (including formative assessment and opportunities for group work) for all levels of provision, including Research Students’ Progress Board (RSPB) for PGR provision.
* Information on how the department maintains an appropriate level of assessment that is proportionate to the credit value and continues to meet all module learning outcomes.
* A summary of the information provided to students (such as how and when the assessment / marking criteria is provided and how it is used, how assessment corresponds to intended learning outcomes, weightings, descriptors, as well as academic support available, including support for reassessment).
* Details of how module assessments are scheduled across the academic year (including formative assessment). Include details of any End-Point Assessments for apprenticeships.
* A summary of how the department monitors the effectiveness and timeliness of feedback.
* A description on how the department ensures marking and moderation processes are consistently operated and clearly articulated to students and External Examiners.
* Innovations in assessment methods under consideration or recently introduced.
* An overview of External Examiner feedback on assessment strategies and implementation in practice.
* Professional Body Requirements, if appropriate.
* For courses embedding work-based or work-related learning – if employers are involved in the assessment of student – explain how they work with academic staff and what systematic arrangements are in place for coordinating such activity involving academic staff. Highlight where there are differences for apprenticeships.

1. **Reassessment**

* An outline of the department’s approach to reassessment methods for all levels of provision.
* An outline of reassessment methods for all levels of provision; how this aligns with the University policy for like-for-like assessment and reassessment and reasons for any variation between assessment and reassessment formats.
* Information on how the department maintains an appropriate level of reassessment that is proportionate to the credit value and continues to meet all module learning outcomes.

1. **Reflection on current teaching, learning and assessment methods and approaches**

* What is the department’s rationale behind the approach to teaching, learning and assessment?
* What has the department learnt from the changes to learning, teaching and assessment in response to the pandemic?
* How do teaching, learning and assessment methods:
  + stimulate and challenge students, and encourage them to actively engage
  + meet the needs of a diverse range of students, including nationality and those with disabilities? (Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service provide [guidance](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/students-with-disabilities/ensuring-your-teaching-practice-is-inclusive-for-disabled-students) on ensuring your teaching practice is inclusive for disabled students).
  + support skills development
  + promote and embed academic integrity, including to prevent and detect plagiarism in assessment
* How does the department encourage and support students to offer feedback? What actions have been taken by the department in response to student feedback (including student module feedback, PGR SVS, UKES, NSS and any other forms of feedback)?
* What are the plans for future development of teaching, learning and assessment?

**Appendix**

Please contact QUAD, Organisational Development and / or the Faculty Deans for support in planning, designing, and implementing the approach as well as reflecting on current teaching, learning and assessment methods.

QUAD have developed an example template which can be adapted for departments.

**Useful resource weblinks:**

Policy/strategy documents:

[Assessment policy](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/directories/academic-section/academic-standards-and-quality/assessment-policies-summary.pdf)

[Assessment feedback policy](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/directories/academic-section/academic-standards-and-quality/assessment-feedback-policy.pdf)

[Marking policy](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/exams-and-assessment/assessment-and-marking-policies)

University [strategic plans](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/governance/university-strategic-plan):

* Education Strategy
* Education Action Plan
* Research Action Plan

[Sustainability / Environmental considerations](https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability/the-climate-and-ecological-emergency)

[Code of Practice for Research Degrees](https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/governance/policies)

[Regulations relating to academic affairs and research degrees](https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/governance/regulations)

**Organisational Development** [**Guidance and Resources**](https://open.essex.ac.uk/course/index.php?categoryid=6)**:**

1. [Education Insights series](https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=11896.) - The sessions cover a range of topics from new teaching introductory session to module design, delivery of teaching and assessment strategies.
2. Group coaching for educators - This is an initiative by Organisational Development to support all academics and student-facing staff with teaching responsibilities. This initiative combines the benefits of coaching with effective professional development through a personalised experience, collaborative learning, contextualised and practice-oriented development. Staff can directly book to attend via HR organiser (iTrent).
3. [Peer Review Policy and the use of Peer Exchange Network](https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6190.) - This is to facilitate peer observations and foster conversations about teaching and learning by pairing academic colleagues (new and experienced).
4. Support for colleagues to reflect on their practices through Organisational Development’s Pathways to Fellowship: PG CHEP, PG MaCE, and CADENZA. The Cadenza team can provide vital information to faculties around levels of engagements with these programmes and good practice information.
5. There are [resources on technology enhanced learning developed by TEL team](https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=5152). These cover a wide range of topics from using our VLE (Moodle baseline for modules), to increasing student engagement tools (poll everywhere), using zoom for online learning and teaching and dual delivery. Please liaise with the team for more information ([tel@essex.ac.uk](mailto:tel@essex.ac.uk)).
6. There are also specific postgraduate research resources available - [Supervising Postgraduate Research Students Moodle resource](https://moodle.essex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=14288) and [Vitae UK](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/) (which includes opportunities for further training and colleagues can register for membership as an University of Essex employee).

**Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Service Guidance and Resources:**

1. [Guidance](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/students-with-disabilities/ensuring-your-teaching-practice-is-inclusive-for-disabled-students) for ensuring your teaching practice is inclusive for disabled students
2. University [anti-racism resources](https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/equality-and-diversity/tackling-racism) including [Talis](https://rl.talis.com/3/essex/lists/81A0B6A4-B09C-5DE1-9C8E-519F0EC342A3.html?lang=en-US&login=1%5C) and specifically the Black Lives Matter [reading list](https://rl.talis.com/3/essex/lists/21ABA282-38A3-D881-0350-5A245414C105.html).
3. Library resources for [decolonising the curriculum](https://library.essex.ac.uk/edi)
4. [Web accessibility guidance](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/web-support/web-accessibility) and [writing for the web](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/web-support/writing-for-the-web)

For more information on inclusivity please contact the Inclusivity Lead in your department or the [Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Service](mailto:wellbeing@essex.ac.uk).

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