



## Principle 4: Making assessment manageable for students and markers

### What the principle means

There are concerns nowadays that we are causing problems for our students and ourselves by over-assessing. What we should be seeking is to maximise student time on productive task without making our own lives unworkable. Older programmes often have too many assessed tasks in total if new authentic tasks have been added without removing older ones like end-of-semester exams. Having several smaller incremental tasks within a module need not be problematic if some can be formatively assessed, for example, in a classroom setting, or if they are shared among a marking team.



### Questions to consider with your course team and students

- ✓ Is the number/size/volume of your assessed tasks within the module appropriate?
- ✓ Are you over-assessing?
- ✓ Is the scope of your assessment right in terms of level (that is, not too hard for 1st Years or sufficiently challenging for Final Year students)?
- ✓ Have you considered how cumulative marking loads for different years of the course are going to mount up for individual assessors?
- ✓ Can you space assignment submissions out more evenly across the year so that students and assessors aren't crushed by multiple competing deadlines?
- ✓ Have you checked with your fellow assessors that the assignments you have designed are sensible and viable?
- ✓ Are you able to collaborate with colleagues and/or former students to 'destruction test' your assignments to see what might go wrong, so you can work out mitigations/alternative approaches?
- ✓ Have you built in sufficient time for you and your fellow assessors to mark work in time for your deadlines/moderation activities?
- ✓ Have you got a team of sufficient size to get through the workload in the time required to do justice to the students?

### Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 4, as a team can you identify areas that you know to be priorities for enhancing your programme assessment and feedback strategy in the coming three years? All areas are important, but selecting too many can make genuine actionable proposals unachievable which is demoralising. Concentrate on what is feasible.

Once you have agreed on the priorities, you may wish to use the table overleaf to record your plans for enhancement under Principle 4.



# Principle 4 worksheet - Making assessment manageable for students and markers

Principle focus	Specific actions you will take:	Responsible leader:	Help/resources needed to make this happen:	Milestones (timescale for implementation):	Performance indicators:
e.g. Marking deadlines and moderation	e.g. Revisit marking deadlines and moderation practice in modules with large groups	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional learning about moderation</li> <li>Module outlines and programme documentation</li> <li>Time to work as a programme team</li> <li>Administrative support</li> <li>Consultation with colleagues in the Exams Office</li> </ul>	e.g. One academic year	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater knowledge of moderation across the team, including, where necessary, a revised approach to moderation.</li> <li>Records of discussions across team regarding marking deadlines and moderation.</li> <li>Document outlining the agreed approach to moderation.</li> </ul>

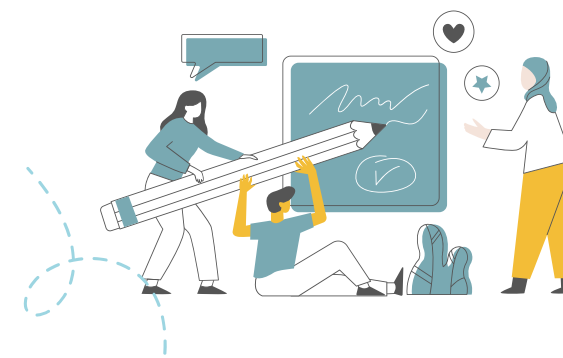


## About this resource

This resource is drawn from the *Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design* (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 4 – Making assessment manageable for students and markers'. The resource can be used by teams who wish to review how this principle is enacted in their work, and who wish to plan to enhance their practice regarding this principle. The resource can be used as a stand-alone thinking and planning tool for teams, as well as being considered in the context of the toolkit as a whole.

As part of the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' project, Professor Sally Brown and Professor Kay Sambell designed a toolkit for effective assessment design. This toolkit has been designed to provide course teams at Maynooth University with guidance on periodical review of their assessment and feedback practices, in support of student success. The toolkit involves twelve principles which were proposed by Brown and Sambell, and shaped and modified by the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Advisory Group. The toolkit is available at in the Maynooth University [Assess for Success Hub](#).

The principles and the toolkit taken as a whole set a substantial agenda for action, but Brown and Sambell stress that the toolkit can primarily help local teams to set short- and longer-term prioritised targets to enhance assessment by focusing on activities that would help to ensure that assessment tasks, assignments and feedback could fully contribute to student engagement and positive outcomes.



### How to cite this resource:

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