THE COMMON AWARDS

IN THEOLOGY, MINISTRY AND MISSION

Overview

ASSESSMENT TYPES

ASSESSMENTS: Modes of assessment

The following table gives descriptions and some guidance about the different modes of assessment used to assess learning outcomes within the Common Awards modules.

Marking criteria and more detailed guidelines for both teachers and students have been developed for each mode of assessment, and reference should always be made to them.

Assessed conversations

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This involves responding orally to questions asked by a tutor. The questioning may be on a particular topic or project, or a broader range of topics within the module.	Assessed conversations assess students' ability to communicate knowledge and understanding appropriately, clearly, with sensitivity and rigour, and to clarify, expand or defend what they have said in response to questioning. They may offer the student the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to make connections with other disciplines and with practice.	It is important to be clear with the student how the conversation will be structured and what topic(s) or project(s) the conversation will or may cover. Conversations should be recorded if possible for moderation and external examination. If not, it is likely to be necessary to have two markers present.

Assessed discussions

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This involves students evidencing and developing their learning together through discussion. It is likely to be an asynchronous online forum, but may be synchronous, in person and/or oral.	Assessed discussions assess students' ability to communicate knowledge and understanding appropriately and clearly, and to clarify, expand, defend or modify what they have said in response to questioning. They also test their ability to use their knowledge and understanding to help others develop theirs.	It is important for the expectations for the assignment to be set out clearly.

Essay / written assignment

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
Examples of written assignments include: • an essay • an exegesis • a gobbet • an article • a briefing paper • a letter • the text of a sermon or talk • response to a case study	Written assignments • assess students' ability to summarise, synthesise, analyse and locate knowledge and understanding within the conceptual framework of the subject area as well as that of a particular context • offer the student the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to make connections with other disciplines and with practice • test students' ability make use of the resources available to them and to plan and manage their time effectively.	Some written assignments may have more than one part, e.g. sermon text and a rationale of the approach taken.

Written theological reflection

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This is a written piece of work that relates knowledge and understanding with experience and practice. It generally requires the student to follow a particular methodology of critical theological reflection.	Theological reflection enables students to demonstrate their ability to connect knowledge and understanding with practice and experience using a well-defined methodology of theological reflection with rigour and sensitivity.	This method can be used as the sole method of assessment for a practice-based module, but is generally more likely to be one component of a module, and, as such, is an effective way of encouraging integration between 'theory' and practice. It is important to maintain rigorous engagement with the subject area, practice / experience, and the methodology of reflection – and the marking criteria should reflect this.

Book review

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This is a written piece summarizing and evaluating a book. It may include comparisons with other relevant literature in the field. A **comparative book review** requires the student to engage with two books, to review them and critically compare them.	Book reviews demonstrate students' ability to locate the subject of the book in a wider context, to summarise and engage critically with its content, as well as reflect on the impact of the book on their learning.	

Literature review

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This involves gathering a range of appropriate (scholarly) texts for a particular focus of study. It requires the student to begin to exercise independent research skills involving analysis, synthesis, critique and evaluation.	Literature reviews demonstrate a student's grasp of the current literature in a specific subject area and the ability to carry out critical research into contemporary scholarship and writings relevant to the subject being tackled.	In order to be effective as a learning tool, such reviews should go beyond summary descriptions of literature to comparison and critical evaluation both in relation to each other and to the proposed focus of the review. This assessment form can be a useful precursor to a dissertation or research project.

Resources for others

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
Examples of this form of assessment include creating the material for a series of small group studies or the liturgy for a service of worship.	Creating resources for others demonstrates the ability to communicate knowledge and understanding to a variety of audiences with relevance, rigour and creativity.	This method should enable students to demonstrate creativity, and may involve a range of media. Guidelines should make clear how the task will be assessed for subject content as well as for creativity, appropriateness and effectiveness of communication to the specified audience.

Placement or visit report

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This includes description, analysis and reflection on the placement or visit.	A placement or visit report assesses students' ability to engage respectfully with the views of others and to make connections between knowledge, practice and experience.	Reports should go beyond a reflective account to evaluation and proposals for change.

Reflective journal

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This is usually written over a period of time and includes reflective responses to questions and learning. It shows development of learning over time.	Reflective journals are an opportunity to demonstrate the skills of critical reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity. In addition, it offers learners the opportunity to contribute new ideas and thinking to the subject matter and its relation to practice.	Students should be encouraged to show evidence of engaging with theological disciplines as well as with practice, experience and their own transformative learning. Journals are likely to form only part of the assessment of a module. They are particularly appropriate for placement and integrative collaborative learning.

Written examination

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
Written exams usually occur at the end of a module. They may be 'seen', where the student is aware in advance of the question(s) they are expected to answer, or 'unseen', where the questions are only revealed 'on the day'. In an 'open-book' exam, a student is allowed to use a selection of reference materials during the assessment. Written exams usually take place under timed conditions.	Written examinations assess students' ability to summarise, synthesise, analyse and locate knowledge and understanding within the conceptual framework of the subject area as well as that of a particular context. In addition, it offers the student the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to make connections with other disciplines and with practice. In addition, they test students' ability to communicate well in writing under time pressure.	Examinations are particularly appropriate when students need to demonstrate a grasp of the breadth of material covered in a module. Helping students prepare for examinations can help allay the fears often associated with exams, especially among mature students.

Short tests

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
These tests often require short answers to questions, or may be multiple choice. They are typically used either in language learning where they assess learning of grammar, vocabulary and translation skills, or in online learning where they assess the engagement with the part of the module with which the student has most recently engaged.	Short tests assess knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, and often the ability to apply this. The short form nature of tests means they are often not suited to assessing learning outcomes that require a longer, more discursive, demonstration of what students have learnt.	Short tests are likely to take place at various points during the course of a module. They may take place under 'examination conditions' or (especially in online learning) be more flexible.

Oral Presentation

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This could be an oral or multimedia presentation, where both the content and the performance / medium are assessed. It could also be a prepared debate, an individual contribution to a seminar or a response to a case study. Presentations should be recorded, or copies of the students' slides or transcripts should be retained for moderation and external examination. At a minimum, notes from the markers, the mark proforma and feedback to students should be retained.	Oral presentations assess students' ability to communicate knowledge and understanding appropriately, clearly, with sensitivity and rigour, and to adapt these attributes to specific audiences.	When learning outcomes include oral communication skills, then an oral assessment is likely to be a part of the assessment. It is likely to be accompanied by a written rationale for the presentation, or another assessment task entirely. Clarity about the task, its audience (whether specialist or non-specialist), its timing and the proportion of marks given for subject content versus presentation skills are essential for this method of assessment.

Group project

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This is a project with an output that involves the whole group at every stage and for which there may be group and/or individual assessment.	In addition to testing a student's knowledge, understanding and insight into the subject area, a group project tests a student's ability to work with others, engaging respectfully with the views of others and, in some cases, embodying ethical principles in a professional context.	Designing, implementing and assessing group projects involves making clear decisions about the nature of the group's task, how groups are formed, how the work is to be submitted, how marks will be allocated to the content of the project and, for example, to how well the group and/or individual collaborated.

Practical skills assessment

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This involves performance (for example, delivery of a sermon, verbatim conversation, leading worship) and assessment of it. It may include a commentary or reflection on the preparation and/or delivery of the performance. Performance of the skill(s)/task(s) should be recorded, or copies of the students' slides or, at a minimum notes from the markers, the mark proforma and feedback to students should be retained.	Practical skills assessment focuses on whether, and/or how well, a student performs a specific practical skill, technique or competency. In the context of the practices of Christian ministry and discipleship, practical skills often test students' effectiveness in communicating how their knowledge and understanding relate to Christian faith and the life of the church.	This form of assessment is particularly prominent for more practice-based modules, but is also effective as an assessment component of other modules when the learning outcomes include application of knowledge and understanding to a particular competency. It is unlikely to be the sole form of assessment, requiring at least **a written reflection on practice**, and/or another piece of work.

Portfolio

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
This is a structured collection of evidence and critical analysis produced over a period of time designed to support and document learning and development towards the intended learning outcomes of a module. Portfolios comprise a number of components, and can include a range of media. They are likely to include a number of the assessments methods in this list.	Well-constructed portfolios offer students the opportunity to produce evidence of having achieved the learning outcomes of a module. These include knowledge, understanding, the skills of critical reflection and reflexivity, and the ability to make appropriate connections with practice and experience.	Students should be given guidance on the expected contents of a portfolio – sometimes it will be appropriate to specify these quite closely, while sometimes more may be left to student discretion.

Project

Brief description & examples	Learning outcomes assessed	Additional notes
Examples include a piece of artwork, participation in or leadership of an event or project (for example, mission, worship service, structured retreat, a process of change, establishment of a new initiative such as a children's after school club).	A project-based task requires the student to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject together with the ability to contextualize and communicate this appropriately. It will often test the skills and dispositions of collaborative leadership.	Projects offer an authentic 'real world' opportunity that integrates learning. It is likely that supervision during the course of the project will be needed to guide and monitor the student's progress. The "length" of a project is not necessarily measured in words. Where a word length is specified in assessment templates, a reasonable estimate of equivalent work load should be stipulated.