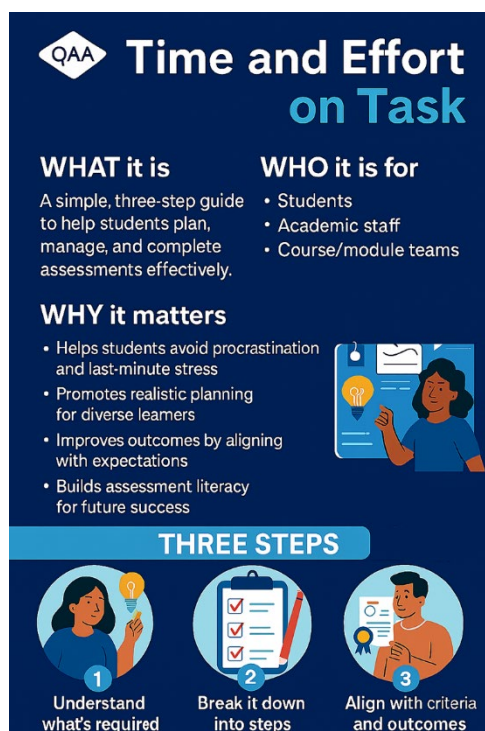


Time and Effort on Task Toolkit

A Guide for Staff



Developed by:

Christina Magkoufopoulou, Coventry University; and Lucie Ingram, University of West London.



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Contents

Purpose of this document.....	3
Applying the Toolkit in Practice.....	3
When introducing assessment tasks to students.	3
When evaluating the effectiveness of existing assessment tasks.....	3
When designing new assessment tasks:	3
Assessment Tariffs, Policies and Guidelines	3
Designing assessment through a “Time-and-Effort” lens	4
Step 1: Prior Knowledge	5
Key idea	5
Why this matters	5
Time and Effort on Task Templates.....	5
Recommendations on using the templates.....	5
Step 2: Task Break down	6
Key idea	6
Why this matters	6
Time and Effort on Task Templates.....	6
Recommendations on using the templates.....	6
Step 3: Alignment	8
Key idea	8
Why this matters	8
Time and Effort on Task Template.....	8



Purpose of this document

This document aims to provide an easy-to-use tool when designing assessment tasks that will consider not only the output as words or minutes, but the effort and time required for the students to engage with the assessment task.

The tool is designed for use:

- In the classroom with the students when introducing the assessment task.
- Within module teams during the planning stage, to support discussions around the expectations and structure of the assessment.
- At course level, to holistically consider the assessment load of students throughout each semester and facilitate discussions on how assessment tasks are integrated to support students' knowledge acquisition, and skills development.

Applying the Toolkit in Practice

When introducing assessment tasks to students.

- To support delivery teams in creating relevant resources, guidance, and activities to facilitate the development of students' assessment literacy.

When evaluating the effectiveness of existing assessment tasks.

- To facilitate module and course team discussions on the demands of the assessment tasks.
- To facilitate constructive alignment and quality enhancement.

When designing new assessment tasks:

- To facilitate module and course team discussions on the demands of the assessment tasks
- To estimate the appropriate number of credits and notional hours required for the completion of the assessment task for students.

Note: It is not expected that this tool will be applicable to all types of assessments at all levels.

Assessment Tariffs, Policies and Guidelines

Assessment guidelines and policies may exist at a local level, that are informed by University Policies. This guidance is intended to be used as a supportive tool for designing assessments and preparing students for assessment.



Designing assessment through a “Time-and-Effort” lens

Assessment output tends to be defined by word-count (e.g. in essays) or time (e.g. in presentations). However, fewer words can, in fact, make an assessment more challenging, and often the time and effort requirements are overlooked and underestimated.

By designing assessment through a “Time-and-Effort” lens, we could provide the necessary guidance and support to students that are completing the assessment task. When considering ‘Time-and-Effort’, a starting point would be to consider the notional hours, and through that the expected hours that students will need to invest for the assessment preparation.

The following three steps (Fig 1) could be used to support the assessment design process through a “Time and Effort” lens in order to help students to develop their assessment literacy. The steps are interlinked and the order that are presented, does not necessarily indicate the order that they should be addressed during the assessment design process.

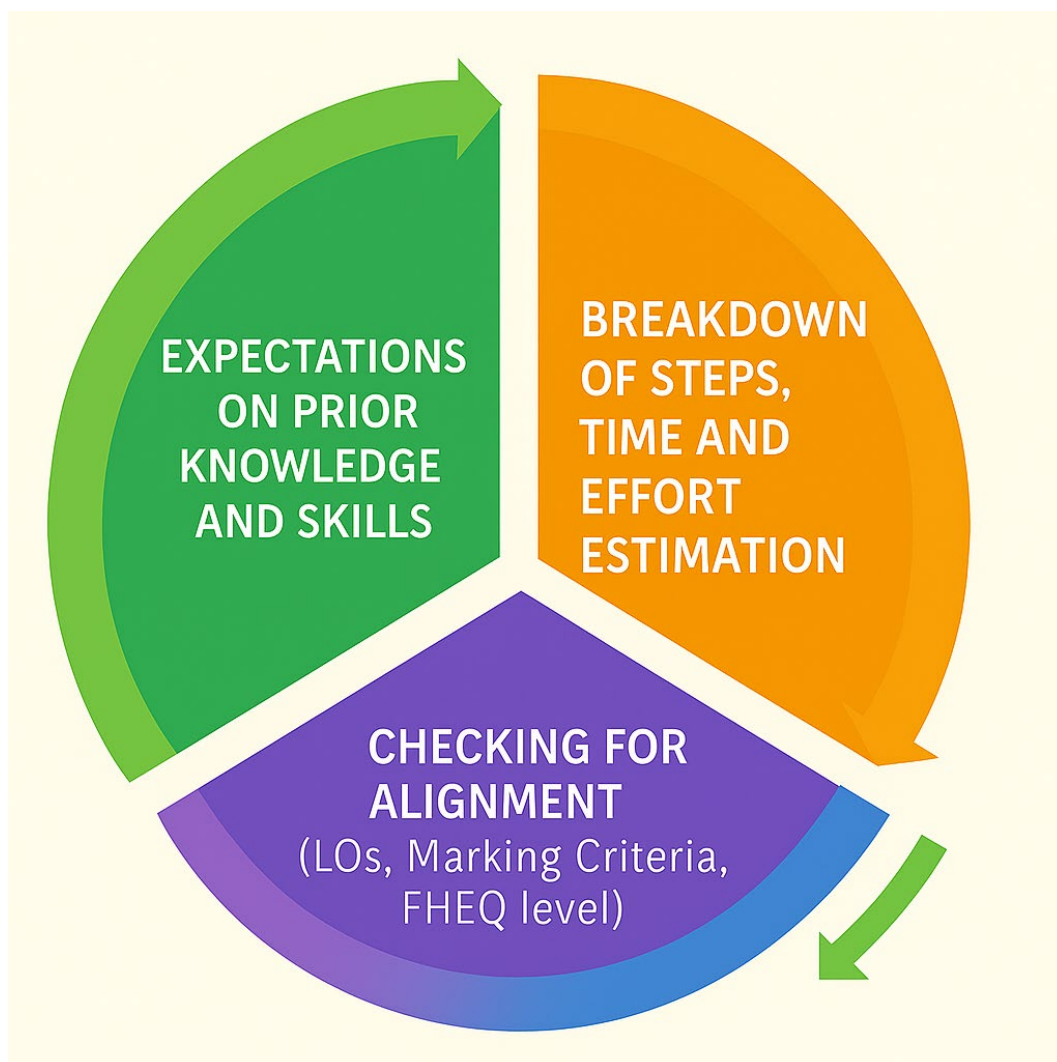


Figure 1 Three-step process demonstrating the key considerations in assessment planning and design.

Step 1: What are we expecting the students to know and/or be able to do, that is required for the assessment, but they are not learning as part of the module?

Key idea

The expectations on prior knowledge and skills need to be clearly communicated to students.

Why this matters:

Frequently, we rely on students' prior knowledge and skills to allow them to complete an assessment task. We expect students to have gained this knowledge and developed those skills outside of the module that is being assessed. For instance, asking students to prepare a presentation assumes that the students are familiar with public speaking and possibly with the use of presentation software such as PowerPoint.

Similarly, we expect students to have some prior knowledge and experience with specific assessment types e.g. writing a report. It is important to remember that our students come from different backgrounds and have diverse skillsets. At Level 5 and 6, we may expect students to have developed their assessment literacy through prior assessment tasks. By identifying the expectations on prior knowledge and skills, the module team can further signpost students to resources to help them refresh their knowledge. Completing Step 1 within the template will help you collect such information.

Time and Effort on Task Templates

A structured template (see template for staff) can be used to help you to:

- List pre-existing skill and knowledge requirements
- Identify available resources to signpost students to help them refresh their knowledge and further develop their skills. (e.g. workshops, prior modules, university-wide support)
- A similar template is available for students that can be used for their own self-reflection and personal development (see template for students).

Recommendations on using the templates

You can use the templates during class time for co-creation and open discussion of assessment requirements and assessment planning.

You can use the templates to help you create a transparent assessment strategy that shows how assessment tasks are connected throughout the course and where students can:



- Refer to prior assessment tasks and engage with the feedback received.
- Understand how prior knowledge feeds into later assessments

Step 2: Time-and-Effort estimation: What are the steps that the students need to take to successfully complete the assessment task and how long each of them would take?

Key idea

Break down assessment tasks into indicative steps that the students need to take in order to complete the assignment.

Why this matters:

Students at different levels will require a different amount of time to complete similar tasks. It is important for the course team to be able to estimate the time that a ‘**novice**’ would require to complete the task and not to base their estimations on their own ‘expert’ capabilities.

As students progress through their course, they would have gained experience with performing similar tasks and they would have developed further the relevant skills. It is therefore possible that the same type of task could take less time for students at higher levels (e.g., compiling a bibliography, using Excel etc.).

Here it is also important to consider once again the course assessment strategy and how certain assessment tasks may be interlinked and provide a developmental path for students both in terms of knowledge acquisition and of mastery of skills.

Time and Effort on Task Templates

A structured template (see template for staff) can be used to help you to:

- Break down assessment tasks into indicative steps that the students need to take in order to complete the assignment
- Recommend indicative time for completion of the task to align with notional learning hours
- Identify relevant resources that can support students with the completion of those steps (how many of those are relevant to your module, how many can be found in university resources e.g. library; how about any external resources, such as online tutorials?)

Recommendations on using the templates

Breaking down assessment tasks into indicative steps that the students need to take in



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order to complete the assignment can be helpful for both staff and students. This activity could also be performed together with the students during a session when assessment requirements are discussed. This will create opportunities to embrace diversity and diverse approaches on undertaking a similar task. It can also help with identifying and co-creating lists of available resources that students have already used successfully e.g. accessing academic writing tutorials. The outcome of this activity can be used to design a guide for students when undertaking the assessment task.

Certain steps could be included in most assessment tasks and help improve students' feedback and assessment literacy, independently of the type of assessment at hand. Those steps can be discussed during class time as well. Types of such steps include:

- [Reflection on past feedback](#)
- Self-evaluation using marking criteria and rubrics
- Discussing with peers
- Analysis of past exemplars

	Reflect on feedback from formative assessment / prior modules	0,5 hours
	Reading the paper	2 hours
	Identifying unknown terms	Up to 2 hours
	Literature research to support/reject the argument of the paper	Up to 10 hours
	Discuss with peers	1 hour
	Draft the review	3 hours
	Self-assess by comparing with the marking rubric	1 hour
	Compare with past exemplars	1 hour
	Finalise the review	2 hours
	Edit and proof-read the review	1 hour
Total		24 hours

Figure 2 Illustrative example of potential steps and recommended time on task for an undergraduate student to write a review of a scientific paper of 1000 words (5 assessment credits).

Step 3: Are the steps identified aligned with other key factors?

Key idea

With the breakdown of the assessment task, it is important to reflect and consider if the recommended steps are aligned with other key factors such as the marking criteria, the module and course learning outcomes and the FHEQ (Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications) level.

Why this matters

The steps that students are asked to complete need to be aligned with what is being assessed, otherwise students may fail to meet key expectations.

Time and Effort on Task Template

The available template (see Template for staff) can be used to confirm the suitability of the steps identified for the assessment task. Below you can find some examples on how to approach the checklist.

✓ Are the steps selected relevant to the marking criteria? Are there any steps that need to be added, altered or removed?

Example 1: Let's assume that an assessment task requires students to develop a website. A step could be added in the breakdown of the assessment task to work on the appearance and graphics of the website, and for this step 1 hour has been allocated. When comparing the steps with the marking criteria, it becomes evident that the marking criteria do not refer to the appearance/graphics of the website but only the content and the sources used. This observation, will lead us to reconsider and reduce the notional time allocated on the appearance of the website.

Example 2: Let's assume that an assessment task requires students to write a report supported by the literature. The break-down of the assessment tasks includes several steps such as literature search, writing the report, and proof-reading. When comparing the steps with the marking criteria, we could see that 10% is given for an accurate reference list. By doing this comparison, we can see that an additional step needs to be added [producing and checking the reference list] to reflect the marking criteria.

✓ Are the students equipped to complete those steps? If not, are there sufficient support mechanisms in place if students need help with any of the steps?

- This can go beyond the assumed pre-existing knowledge and skills, as new skills could be introduced as well. Therefore, further consideration needs to be given as to how the students are being supported throughout the preparation for the assessment task.

- ☑ ***Is this assessment task clearly aligned in terms of skills and knowledge development with prior or future assessment tasks?***
- ☑ ***Does the allocated amount of time align with the expected assessment credits? If not, can we make the appropriate changes?***
- ☑ ***Are the identified sub-steps relevant to the module and course learning outcomes?***
- ☑ ***Are the assessment demands and sub-steps aligned with the level that the students are at during their course?*** ([The frameworks for HE qualifications of UK Degree- awarding bodies](#))

Example: an essay as an assessment task at Level 4 and at Level 7 would have completely different expectations on both the breadth and depth of coverage. However, if the same assessment credits have been allocated to both tasks, a similar notional time on task is expected. The demands of the assessment for a Level 7 student would be higher and aligned with the relevant FHEQ level descriptors which include “a systematic understanding of knowledge”, as opposed to “Knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles” for Level 4. Establishing the expectations on the level and requirements for the assessment task could be introduced within relevant assessment rubrics which can be used both by staff and students to facilitate a dialogue on expectations both on output and time for engagement with the task. Once again, the importance of a transparent assessment strategy that interlinks different assessment tasks and supports the development of both the knowledge and the skills of students is evident.