

## Course Based Assessment – An introduction

### What is a Course Based Assessment (CBA)?

Course based assessment (CBA) refers to an assessment that brings together the learning on two or more modules, thus representing integrative assessment points, or course level assessment.

*Please note that under the current CU regulations, a Course Based Assessment (CBA) is only allowed within a semester, thus a form of horizontal integrative assessment and captured in the Assessment ONLY modules.*

### Why (the value of) implementing Course Based Assessment (CBA)?

Assessing course stage outcome through integrative assessment points are critical in establishing the knowledge, skills and understanding as represented in the overall course learning outcomes. Not only should the achievement of course learning outcomes, be established in the final year of study, but achievement of course level outcomes at all levels (including year one and two of study) should be mapped to establish achievement by students at each level.

Course Based Assessment (CBA) enables the course team to move away from focusing the attention too much on the assessment of module learning outcomes, and shift the focus course level learning outcome achievement. Such practices embrace the achievement of higher order, complex knowledge, skills and understanding as indicated in the course learning outcomes.

Module focused assessment can easily lead to over-assessment that can be limiting students' time for deeper learning. Course Based Assessment (CBA) create opportunities for developing more innovative forms of assessment as well as collaborative learning experiences. Knight and Yorke (2003) talk about 'slow learning' as modules tend to be delivered and assessed over shorter periods of time, whereas course level learning outcomes are assessed over a longer period of time.

Implementing Course Based Assessment (CBA) requires course teams to undertake rigorous mapping of all module learning outcomes on a course, to ensure eventual achievement of all course learning outcomes. Careful planning is essential as students tend to have a more modular approach to their learning, so need to be guided to see the overarching course learning outcomes. Careful consideration is to be given to ensure the sustainability of such assessment in light of staff time in supporting students and assessing Course Based Assessment (CBA).

In summary, Course Based Assessment (CBA) enables a complete shift from a modular to a course based approaches. It requires the involvement of all staff teaching on a course to ensure joint-up thinking. The students should, right from the start, be engaged and supported to develop a clear understanding of the purpose and value of such integrated assessment approaches (CBA).

### What does a Course Based Assessment (CBA) look like?

Course leaders can consider either horizontal and/or vertical assessment at course level to enable integrative assessment. *Please note that under the current CU regulations, a Course Based Assessment (CBA) is only allowed within a semester, thus a form of horizontal integrative assessment and captured in the Assessment ONLY modules.*

*Horizontal integrative assessment tasks assess across one or more modules within a specific stage of the course:*

Assessment to draw on the knowledge and learning from all of the modules (or a selection of modules) at a certain stage (semester) of a course. This way the knowledge, skills and understanding at a certain level can be assessed. This form of assessment at CU, is captured in the Assessment ONLY module, and allows for assessment of learning outcomes from the chosen modules, and is normally aligned to specific course learning outcomes. This integrated assessment can be a blend of different forms of Applied Core Assessment (ACA), or a portfolio demonstrating professional and personal development.

*Vertical integrative assessment tasks assess across one or more stages of the course:*

Assessment to draw on the knowledge and learning from all of the modules (or a selection) at various course stages (year one, year one and two or year one, two and three). One option is to have a module that runs across the period of study, and can be seen as the bridging module or spine module on a course. This module is to capture the achievement of the course level learning outcomes as a student progress through the course.

#### **Some examples of course based assessment to consider:**

##### **Integrative semester assessment**

An example of this is assessment captured in the CU Assessment ONLY modules, where students have an assessment that assesses learning outcomes from all of the modules (or a selection of modules) at a certain stage (semester) of a course. Refer to the guidance on [Core and Applied Core Assessment](#).

##### **Final integrative assessment**

Students can be expected to complete an assignment that demonstrates they meet all the learning outcomes as set at course level. This can be capstone assessment such as final year projects, dissertations, etc.

#### **Explore some case studies here:**

Short guide to programme focused (course level) assessment  
<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/pass/resources/short-guide.pdf>

#### **References and further reading**

Knight, P.T. & Yorke, M. (2003) Employability and Good Learning in Higher Education. *Teaching in Higher Education*. Vol. 8, No. 1.  
Whitfield, R. & Hartley, P. (2017) Whatever happened to Programme Assessment Strategies? [SEDA Educational Developments 18.1](#)