



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Trinity Education Project (TEP): Assessment Subgroup

WP3.2 Effect Cultural Change around Assessment

Profile of assessment practices in TCD January 2019: mapping of assessments identified from a sample of 12 undergraduate Student handbooks, publicly available from January to March 2019

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Acknowledgements: TEP: Assessment Subgroup 2018-2019, Trinity Assessment Fellows (TAFs) and Trinity Assessment Assistant (TAA) trainees, January to March 2019, Dr Eileen McEvoy (National Forum) and Dr Geraldine O Neill (UCD) [collaborator with Dr Ciara O Farrell and Dr Cicely Roche on Programme Focused Assessment digital badge].



Introduction/ Background:

Programme-focussed assessment is a key component of the TEP assessment Framework (Figure 1). Programme-focussed assessment review establishes the full picture of assessments across a programme of learning. Modular systems are underpinned with a philosophy that learning can be broken down into quantifiable units with accompanying measurable learning outcomes, and that modules are discrete, independent units. This can result in fragmentation and incoherence of the educational experience. This is particularly true of assessment.

The literature recommends ‘programme mapping’ as a catalyst for reflection and collegial dialogue (e.g. Jessop et al, 2014; O’Neill, Donnelly, Fitzmaurice, 2013). A stepped approach commonly involves mapping assessments across a programme, or year of programme. This initial assessment mapping process supports a team-based approach to review existing assessments in the context of programme outcomes, in order to clearly identify what is currently going on in the programme. Development of a Digital badge in Programme Focussed assessment (NF, 2017-2018) was led by Dr Ciara O Farrell, Dr Cicely Roche TCD and Dr Geraldine O Neill UCD.

The National Forum for Teaching and Learning (National Forum) published a profile of assessment practices in Irish Higher Education’ in 2016, derived from Module descriptors of three semesters (the first and last Semester and one mid-programme semester) across a sample of 30 undergraduate degree programmes in the Irish Higher education sector. A key finding, widely quoted, was that average assessment load increased with reduced module size across programmes.

The TEP Assessment subgroup recommended that a range of programmes should be mapped, and that Trinity Assessment Assistants (TAAs) be recruited and trained to support programme mapping in TCD (November 2018). Academic Staff applied to become Trinity Assessment Fellows (TAFs), and were advised that trained TAAs would be available to support them in programme-focussed approaches to assessment.

The design of the TAA’s training and assessment process was influenced by the National Forum’s [Profile of Assessment Practices in Irish Higher Education \(2016\)](#). Twelve (12) Programmes, 4 from each Faculty in Trinity, were chosen as follows:

- i) The list would include at least one joint programme and one language;
- ii) Disciplines of TAFs and subgroup members were prioritised;
- iii) Following i) and ii) disciplines of trainee TAAs were taken into account.

Twenty six (26) assistants were enrolled for training. They were paired to collaboratively map assessments across one of 12 undergraduate programmes offered in Trinity, using printed copies of publicly available student handbooks (provided by the project team) and, where TAAs deemed necessary, TAAs accessed additional information available on Trinity Schools’ websites. Mapping templates, in the format of Excel spreadsheets with pre-agreed drop-down lists for e.g. Module size, assessment duration and weighting (summary of findings provided in Figure 2 and Appendix 2), enabled a consistent approach to mapping across programmes and supported amalgamation of data from across the 12 undergraduate programmes. The TEP resource/assessment list developed by Trinity Education Fellows (TEFs, 2016-2017) was extended according to subgroup member recommendations, and the extended list was incorporated into the mapping template (Appendix 1).

All modules undertaken by a ‘typical student’ progressing through each degree were mapped. Where a typical student would choose from amongst a range of optional modules, and the options aligned with varying numbers of assessments, choice of options was ‘pro-rata’ according to numbers of assessment in optional modules¹.

¹ All records, with reviewer/ project team notations, have been retained by CAPSL.



Figure 1: Trinity Education project, Assessment framework

TRINITY EDUCATION PROJECT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK



Assessment Framework for Undergraduate students:

- supports the acquisition of graduate attributes;
- supports learning;
- is programme-focused;
- supports meta-learning;
- and actively engages students and staff



Key Findings:

- The amount of information ‘publicly’² available about programme modules, and the assessment within them, differs within and across Faculties in TCD (January to March 2019).
- There are no common patterns in programme design with regard to module size i.e. programmes do not follow set patterns such as having all 5 credit modules or changing from 5 credit modules in the first year, to larger modules in later years³.
- Module sizes vary. Module sizes of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 credits were identified. Of a total of 383 modules across 12 undergraduate programmes, 225 (59%) are 5 credit modules and 133 (35%) are 10 credit modules.
- The number of assessment per ECTS credit completed by a student differs between Faculties and between programmes. Of a total of 855 assessments across 12 undergraduate programmes, 5 ECTS modules have an average of 2.05 assessments, and 10 ECTS modules have an average of 2.5 assessments.
- ‘Examination: written’ is the most common assessment method, although its popularity (i.e. number or frequency of assessments) ranges from 25% to 49% of total number of assessments in the programme.
- ‘Not identified’ was the second most common listed in the assessment method category. It appeared in 10 of the 12 programmes. Its popularity ranges from 9% to 38% of total number of assessments in the programme.
- There is a range of assessment methods in all programmes, but the types of assessments differ across programmes i.e. the number of assessment methods from amongst the 20 categories ranged from 6 to 14 across the programmes studied (Appendix 2.).

Preparation of the ‘profile of assessment practices’ from the data collected by TAAs:

- For analysis and reporting purposes, the programmes are pseudo-anonymised by coding as ‘Programme 1’ to ‘Programme 12’ respectively. Programmes 1 to 4 are in the Faculty of AHSS, programmes 5 to 8 are in Faculty of EMS and programmes 9 to 12 are in the Faculty of HS.
- Planning for collation of data and representation of findings were informed by a meeting with Dr Eileen McEvoy from the National Forum (11th July 2019). The meeting aimed to compare TCD’s proposed approach to data ‘analysis’ with that used by the National Forum (2016) with the objective of identifying whether minor adjustments, or additions to the proposed process, might optimise the ability to compare and contrast outcomes/outputs.

² Refers to e.g. publicly available student handbooks and material/information on School websites.

³ 20 credit modules were identified in year 4 of 9 of the 12 undergraduate programmes – likely aligned with ‘Capstone’.



Key comparisons between data from the Trinity Mapping Process and the National Forum Study are summarised in Table 1.

	National Forum study 2016	TCD mapping process 2019 (Jan to March)
Source of data	Desktop review of publicly available online material, with occasional direct contact to HEI (researcher)	Desktop review of publicly available student handbooks/ online material (TAAs)
Selection of programmes for inclusion	Pseudo-randomised selection of a range of 3 and 4 year programmes ³ ,	4 Degree programmes ⁴ selected from each Faculty (convenience sample – total of 12)
Number of semesters included in study	90 ¹	96 ²
Number of modules included in study	487	383
Number of assessments included in study	1260	855
Average number of assessments in 5 ECTS Credit Modules	2.6	2.05
Average number of assessments in 10 ECTS Credit Modules	2.8	2.5
<p>1. The NF (2016) study reviewed modules in three semesters from each programme, first and last Semester and one mid-programme semester</p> <p>2. The TCD study reviewed all modules in all semesters of the 12 undergraduate programmes</p> <p>3. The NF study included a range of 3 and 4 year programmes, pseudorandomised selection across HEIs, according to ISCED categorisations (NF, 2016)</p> <p>4. The TCD study included ten 4 year programmes and two 5 year programmes (MPharm & Medicine). Modules related to year 5 of these two programmes were excluded from subsequent analysis.</p>		

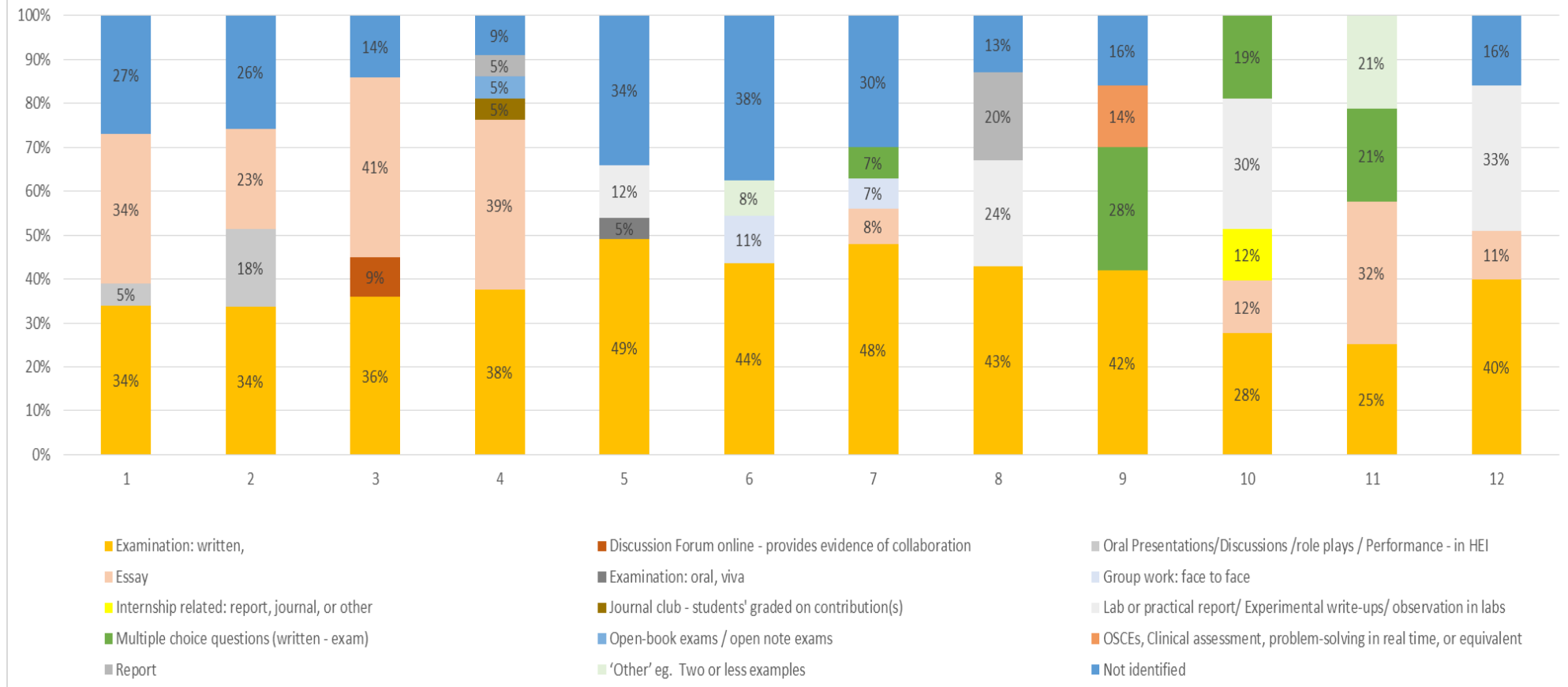
Table 1: Comparisons between Trinity Programme mapping and National Forum study (2016)

Top Four Assessment Method Categories:

The top four assessment method categories in each Programme by popularity (number or frequency of assessments) are summarised in Figure 2 and the percentage of each of the top four assessment method categories are provided in Table 2 below.



Figure 2. Top four TCD assessment method categories in each programme





Programme Number	Examination: written,	Discussion Forum online - provides evidence of collaboration	Oral Presentations /Discussions /role plays / Performance - in HEI	Essay	Examination: oral, viva	Group work: face to face	Internship related: report, journal, or other	Journal club - students' graded on contribution(s)	Lab or practical report/ Experimental write-ups/ observation in labs	Multiple choice questions (written - exam)	Open-book exams / open note exams	OSCEs, Clinical assessment, problem-solving in real time, or equivalent	Report	'Other' eg. Two or less examples	Not identified
1	34%		5%	34%											27%
2	34%		18%	23%											26%
3	36%	9%		41%											14%
4	38%			39%				5%			5%		5%		9%
5	49%				5%				12%						34%
6	44%					11%								8%	38%
7	48%			8%		7%				7%					30%
8	43%								24%				20%		13%
9	42%									28%		14%			16%
10	28%			12%			12%		30%	19%					
11	25%			32%						21%				21%	
12	40%			11%					33%						16%

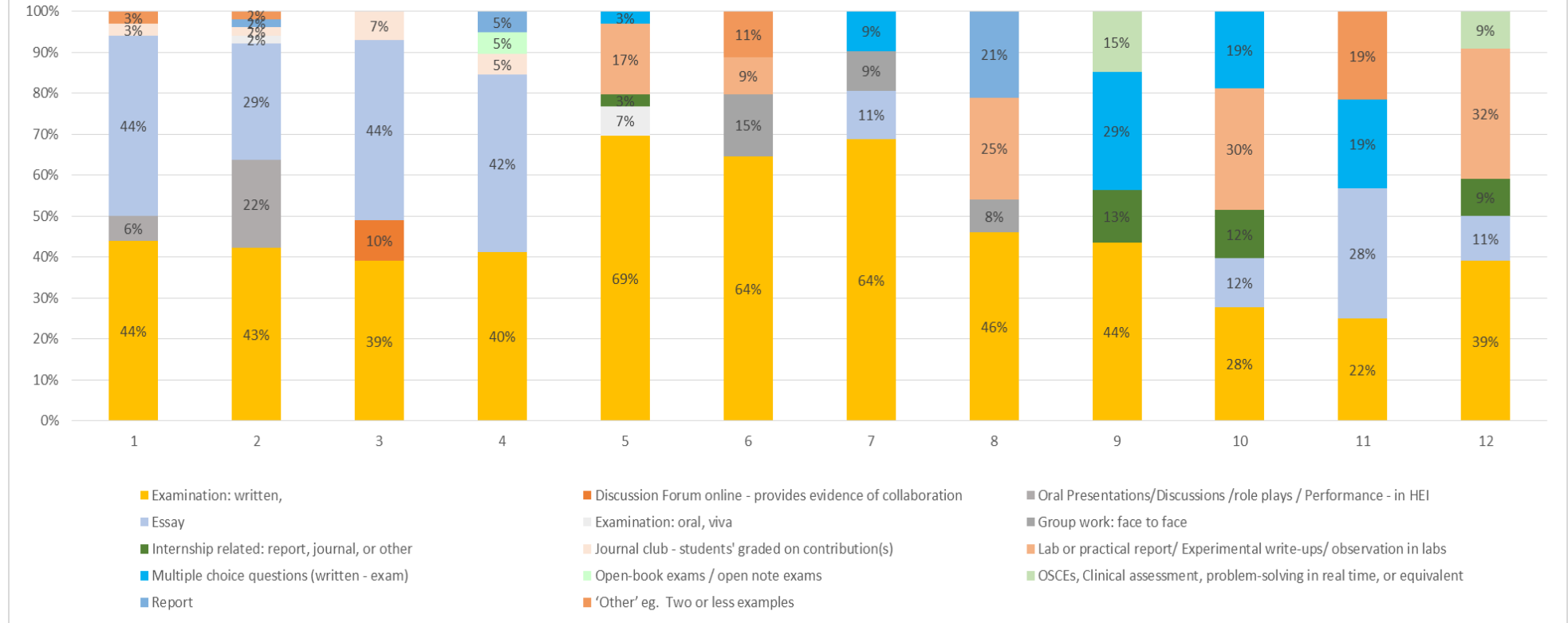
Table 2: Percentage of top four TCD assessment method categories in each programme

Key observations, further to review of Figure 2, Figure 3 and Table 2, included that:

- Five (5) of the 20 assessment methods included in Table 2 were not a top 4 for any of the 12 undergraduate programmes (Debate; Feedback Session led; Poster; Problem-based learning and Short answer questions)
- A further 6 assessment methods were included in the top 4 of only one of the 12 undergraduate programmes (Online discussion forum; Examination (oral); Internship related; Journal club; Open-book exam and OSCEs)
- Five (5) assessment types dominate the 'mapping' profile (Examination (written); Essay; Lab or practical report; Multiple choice questions and Not identified)
- 'Examination: written' is the most common assessment method and appears in the top 2 assessment methods for all 12 undergraduate programmes
- 'Not identified' is one of the top 4 assessment methods by frequency in 10 of the 12 undergraduate programmes. As this had the potential to skew findings, presentation of the 'top 4 assessment types' was repeated excluding 'not identified' assessments (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Top four TCD assessment method categories excluding 'Not Identified' in each Programme





Considerations for further review and analysis (for discussion):

- Would it be worthwhile to calculate relative weighting of assessment types (top 4) across 12 programmes, for 4 years and for JF/year 1 (TEP) with weighting introduced as [(module credits / 60) x actual assessment weight].
- Other as evolve from Q&A at TEP subgroup meeting 9th October.

References:

Jessop, T., Y. El Hakim, & G. Gibbs. (2014) 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts: a largescale study of students' learning in response to different programme assessment patterns,' *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39:73–88.

National Forum. (2017) *Enhancing Programme Approaches to Assessment and Feedback: CaseStudies, Tools and Commentaries*. Available at: www.teachingandlearning.ie

O'Neill, G., Donnelly, R. & Fitzmaurice, M. (2013) 'Supporting Programme Teams to develop sequencing in higher education curricula.' *The International Journal for Academic Development (IJAD)* 19(4):268–81.

Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment (TESTA) Resources. Available at: <https://www.testa.ac.uk>



Format of assessment method categorisation.

Assessment method category	Examples of wording of assessment in module descriptors
Debate	Student interaction; Oral communication; Class participation
Discussion Forum online - provides evidence of collaboration	Tutorial; Wiki production - group activity; provides evidence of collaboration
Oral Presentations/Discussions /role plays / Performance - in HEI	Student presentation; Commentary on text passage; Contextual Commentary; Literary translation plus commentary; Reading Test, Classroom presentation and paper submission; Tutorial; Class contribution,; Package generated reports; Log files and oral presentations account for 75%; Clinical attachment - which includes a case presentation; Pharmacy practice practical test;
Essay	Student written work completed in unsupervised timeframe; Compulsory Research Project; Coursework; Case study; Research Project; Research project; Exercise review
Examination: written	Exercise; Translation exercise plus grammar notes; Written Exam; In-class exam written; SAQ; MEQ; Close reading exercise
Examination: oral, viva	Completed under examination conditions; Aural Comprehension
Feedback Session led by student; Peer feedback; peer assessment	Student led feedback; Peer Evaluation
Group work: face to face	Group Research Report 60%; Joint Dissenting Judgment; Mooting Programme: applies to Private Law Remedies Mooting Assignment; group in-class exercises; 5 projects, combination of group and individual work, attendance & participation; Communication skills participation and reflective report;
Internship related: report, journal, or other	Workplacements; Dispensing and patient care coursework; Family Case Study tutorials; visits and logbooks; Professional Placement related: report, journal, or other; Competency documentation completed and submitted
Journal club - students' graded on contribution(s)	Journal, Workbook, Single assessment of CCF Live 3 and reflective continuing professional development e-portfolio. Reflective Journal, Reflective writing, Comparative essay; Comparison exercise; Text Analysis Test; Reflective report; Communication skills participation and reflective report; Blog
Lab or practical report/ Experimental write-ups/ observation in labs	Practical Exam; MATLAB Assignment; Station Based Practical exam; Spectroscopy Assessment; Artefact
Multiple choice questions (written - exam)	Quizzes; In class clickers; EMQ
Open-book exams / open note exams	Book Review; Exercise (review); Gobbet week
OSCEs, Clinical assessment, problem-solving in real time, or equivalent	
Poster	
Problem-based learning	Problem solving
Report	Entire Year Project; Package generated reports; Dissertation
Short answer questions	
'Other' – i.e. not on list above (please include comment in 'text' box)	Bibliographic exercise; Continuous Assessment Optional module and mandatory assessment; Conference participation; Lexicon entry; Choice of BC module; Online course of lectures and tutorials; Comprises 3 x brief hand-ins; seminar attendance; Market Tutorials and workshops; Annotated bibliography and reflection; BLS certification; Mandatory clinical certificate Pass/Fail Week 8, submission of certificate of completion for each of the IHI modules; Create a Lesson Plan; Bioinformatics exercise; CAPA sign-off on level4 in behaviours in Domain2 and Domain 4 of the CCF by the end of the 8-month placement; Software writing/production, tutorials, Simulation
Not identified	Reading Report; Review; online case scenarios; Coursework; in class exam; continuous assessment; Pre-online assessment (30%); etest; Web based assessment; IPL exercise; Assignment; Other

Appendix 1 : Assessment method categories



Breakdown of ECTS, Duration of Exam, Wordcount/workload and Weighting

Programme #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
ECTS												
15							15		15	15		
25									25		25	
30						30						
35									35		35	
40											40	
not identified									not identified			
Duration of Exam												
10 minutes		10 mins										
15 minutes										15 mins		
20 minutes		20 mins										
30 minutes											30 mins	
45 minutes									45 mins			
50 minutes								50 mins				
150 minutes												150 mins
Wordcount/Workload												
150 words		150 words										
300 words		300 words										
1200 words						1200						
1500 words			1500	1500						1500	1500	
2450 words											2450	
3500 words												3500
3500-4000		3500-4000	3500									
4000 words		4000	4000	4000								
4500 words											4500	4500
Weighting %												
1									1			
2									2			2
3									3			3
5												
7												7
8									8			8
11									11			
11.33										11.33		
14									14			
16									16			
17									17			
22.33										22.33		
25		25	25	25		25	25	25	25			25
33			33									
35						35	35		35			35
45			45									
52.5												52.5
55									55			
65						65	65					
75			75			75	75	75				75
80					80							
85								85				85

Appendix 2