

## **Eight steps to auditing a programme's assessment: The TESTA Audit**

### **Rationale**

The programme audit is intended to map assessment patterns across a programme. It looks back across modules over a three year degree programme to chart the typical student experience of assessment. The features it maps include the volume of formative and summative assessment, its variety, the percentage derived from coursework and exams, the volume of written and oral feedback, and how criteria contribute to student clarity about goals and standards.

### **Resources**

Essentials to conduct a programme audit:

- 1 x programme leader
- 1 x researcher
- 1 x notebook
- 1 x flipchart
- 1 x document describing the programme
- 2 x hours and 1 x room

### **Ready, steady, go... in eight steps**

#### **STEP 1**

On the flipchart, quantify the typical single honours cohort on the programme - how many first, second and third years. You may want to get additional information about the typical kind of student the degree recruits – in terms of previous educational experience, tariffs, career aspirations etc.

#### **STEP 2**

Ascertain the required number of modules in the first year of the programme and their credit weighting. Draw 4/6/8 - however many – open boxes on the flipchart to represent these modules.

#### **STEP 3**

Begin with core compulsory modules. Ask the programme leader to describe the nature of the assessment on each module – the type of assessment, whether formative or summative. Fill in the boxes as you go along. When you run out of compulsory modules, decide on the most popular optional modules and use these to map the rest of the first year. When you have a complete picture of the first year, tally the summative, formative and variety of assessment.

#### **STEP 4**

Repeat for second and third year. Tally the total number of summative, formative and variety. Tally the number of assessments by exam, and work out the relative percentage of coursework to exams.

## **STEP 5**

Ask the programme leader to estimate how long it takes from the submission of an assessed task to the return of feedback and marks. Clarify whether feedback and marks arrive simultaneously for the student or are separated by prior or subsequent electronic publication of marks. Check how the system for collection of assessed work operates – whether through the administration team, electronically, or through whole class or one-to-one tutorial systems. Clarify whether certain feedback/marks is returned faster than others – for example presentations. Clarify whether marks and feedback are released as provisional, i.e. before the external examining system kicks in. Clarify and factor in whether formative feedback is returned more quickly than summative feedback. If there are different variables – for example 80% of assessment is written work returned after 21 days, and 20% is presentation, returned within one day, do some sums to work out the overall return factor.

## **STEP 6**

Look at the explicit assessment criteria and learning outcomes in the programme documentation. How do written statements appear in mapping from programme to module to task, and is there alignment between tasks and intended outcomes? Discuss how students come to know what ‘good’ is in relation assessment tasks and whether the programme has a system wide approach to developing the student ‘nose’ for what constitutes a good essay, presentation, poster, exam etc. How do feedback processes clarify goals and standards?

## **STEP 7**

Gather together 15-20 cover sheets, and if possible scripts with comments on them from each year – first, second and third year. Sometimes administrators keep photocopied scripts and cover sheets for external examiners.

- Count the number of words on cover sheets and scripts.
- Add first, second and third year total words.
- Divide the total by the number of student cover sheets.
- Multiply the average number of words of written feedback by the total volume of summative feedback.

You will have arrived at the total volume of written words a student might expect over the course of a three year degree programme. If programme leaders can provide substantial evidence of written feedback on formative tasks, across the whole programme and for all students, then factor that in to the sums.

## **STEP 8**

Pull all the data together in a document as soon as possible after the audit has taken place – before you forget it. A model of the sort of document you may come up with is provided in <http://testa.ac.uk/index.php/resources/research-tool-kits/category/11-researchtoolkits> under the name anonymous audit.