

Calculating student assessment workloads and equivalences

Centre for Innovation in Education

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Calculating assessment workloads and equivalences

We have designed this guide to help you design assessments whose length or scope are appropriate to the level and credit hours of your module and also consistent with assessment lengths across the programme.

Are you:



Designing an innovative or authentic assessment and feeling unsure about how 'long' the output should be?



Considering ways to be more inclusive by offering your students more choice in assessment, using the Flexible Assessment Policy (under approval, November 2023)?



Hearing your students complain about excessive workload, raising concerns of over-assessment?



Considering the burden marking assessments places on staff?



Trying to work out why your NSS scores on fairness in assessment are low?



Reviewing your programme's assessments?

If so, this guide is intended to help you estimate students' 'time on task'. The University of Liverpool [Code of Practice on Assessment](#) (2023-24) does not require specific assessment lengths and this guide will not require fixed word lengths or video running-times, etc. for assessments, as these are always highly contextual. Rather, the guide offers a set of estimates to help you and your colleagues to consider word count equivalences within your particular module and programme.

In creating this guide, we have reviewed OFA (2022) and QAA publications (2011; 2018; 2021a; 2021b). We have also drawn on work accomplished by a range of other universities, and we are particularly indebted to: Lancaster University (Allan, 2021); Leeds Beckett University (2018); Ulster University (2018); University College, Dublin (2020); and especially University College, London (2020).

We have also greatly benefited from feedback and ideas shared by members of the Science and Engineering Faculty Education Committee, Chaired by Liz Sheffield: Waleed Al-Nuaimy, Sebastian Dembski, Liam O'Brien, and especially Paul Williamson. Their perspectives also illuminated the importance of a range of contextual factors when calculating assessment equivalences.

Key information: Curriculum Design

01

Key information: Curriculum Design

Credits relate to student workload

A 15-credit module is equivalent to a notional 150 hours of student effort. These hours should include everything the student needs to do, from preparing for and attending classes to working on formative and summative assessments (QAA 2021a).

Additionally, the [level of the credits](#) may impact students' time on task, e.g. certain tasks may be quicker to accomplish for Level 6 students than Level 4 students, although the assessment's complexity/depth overall will be greater for Level 6 students. Leeds Beckett (2018) share some word count norms for particular levels, for instance:

4	5	6	7
Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
1,500 - 2,000 word count	2,000 - 2,500 word count	2,500 - 3,000 word count	3,000 word count

However, as Leeds Beckett's guidance states, these figures will not be appropriate in all modules, and additionally the figures do not factor in the number of module credits or the weighting of the assessment. However, consider level when estimating student workload.

Proportion of module workload to spend on assessment

There is no one-size-fits-all percentage of credit hours for assessment. According to several universities, 20-30% of a student's time should be spent preparing for assessment, with many in the sector favouring the lower end of that scale. These figures remain notional, especially as it can be difficult to separate independent study time (e.g. reading or lab-work) from assessment time (i.e. that reading or lab-work feeds into producing the assessment).

15-credit

	20%	25%	30%
Proportion of hours allocated to assessment	20%	25%	30%
Notional total student hours spent on module	150 hours	150 hours	150 hours
Notional student assessment workload	30 hours	37.5 hours	45 hours

30-credit

	20%	25%	30%
Proportion of hours allocated to assessment	20%	25%	30%
Notional total student hours spent on module	300 hours	300 hours	300 hours
Notional student assessment workload	60 hours	75 hours	90 hours

It may be useful to have a conversation as a programme about expectations within your field and to consult your external examiners for their perspectives on whether you might be over- or under-assessing. The proportion of assessment hours may differ between disciplines, so the question benefits from thinking through. For example, where there is substantial contact time, there may be fewer hours remaining for assessment, or where a continuous assessment approach is used, there may be a strong rationale for increasing the proportion of hours spent on assessment.

Weighting of assessments

In many cases modules have more than one assessment, so you will need to calculate hours available for assessments of different weightings. We offer some weighted estimates in the following pages.

Assessments must measure achievement of Learning Outcomes

To align, all assessments need to test students' achievement of the module Learning Outcomes (LOs). If you have more than one assessment, you should avoid assessing a single LO repeatedly.

Consistency and students' perceptions of fairness

Students will quickly notice if they can complete the assessments in one module within a reasonable number of hours, but find that the assessments for another module of equal credit take substantially longer. This may cause students to respond negatively to the NSS question about fairness in assessment (2023: Q11).

Students may also notice that word counts differ between modules of the same level and credit-weighting. There may, however, be excellent reasons for the difference. For example, a shorter assessment may ask students to write a concise paper for a particular audience (aligning with that module's learning outcomes), which would take as much time to produce as a longer paper.

Communicating your rationale for assessment design helps students recognise equivalence between assessments across modules.

Programmatic thinking

To obtain consistency in the workload expectations across modules at the same level and credit value, think holistically about assessment within your programme (Pitt & Quinlan 2022:42). Discuss the programme assessment strategy with your colleagues and students in order to find ways (as far as possible) to ensure parity in assessment load between modules of the same level and credit weighting.

Contact [CIE](#) if you would like to explore assessment mapping exercises or TESTA exercises (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment).

Key Information: Pedagogy and Practice

Less can be more: tackling over-assessment

Over-assessment negatively impacts both students and staff. For students, over-assessment can trigger stress and provoke a strategic, surface-level approach to learning. For staff, over-assessment also increases workload and associated stress. Regularly reviewing your assessment across the programme enables you to identify and address over-assessment.

As well as relating to the amount of assessment, the 'less can be more' idea also applies to word-counts or equivalent. Shorter, authentic assessments, such as writing for a non-specialist audience in a concise and accessible register, can demand as much student time (and often more engagement) than a higher-word-counted paper, as well as yielding employability benefits. Equally, asking students to produce a short video report, instead of a written one, can exercise their digital fluency and visual communication skills.

This kind of assessment can make it easier for you to complete marking in less time and more easily within the required timeframe (something NSS asks students about). Innovative assessment formats, such as infographics or videos, may be both faster and more enjoyable to mark and result in higher quality student work within an appropriate portion of their time and fewer hours marking for you.

Inclusive approaches and variety in assessment

According to the QAA, 'variety in modes of assessment...helps develop a range of skills and competencies and assesses a range of learning styles.' As one means of providing students with more ways to demonstrate their learning, variety in assessment is one way to make your curriculum more inclusive. See our [DIY Guide to Designing Inclusive and Accessible Assessments](#).

Transparency for students

For clarity, always tell your students how much time you notionally expect them to spend on an assessment (Carless & Boud 2018). Note that of course, as individuals, some students will spend a bit more time, some a bit less. This will help students perceive both expectations and equivalencies across modules.

After an assessment, try asking students how much time they actually spent on the task and then modifying your advice or the assessment itself for future iterations of the module (Arnold 2019:3).

Formative assessment

The [Liverpool Curriculum Framework](#) principle requires us to use ‘[formative assessment](#) and feedback/feedforward... to engage students in active learning in all modules.’

Formative assessment can happen both within and without scheduled classes, so do account for the number of hours you expect students to work on formative assessments when calculating the length of summative assessments.

Linking formative tasks to summative assessments may decrease or better distribute the time you need to spend marking assessments (Imperial College, n.d.).

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Overview of suggested assessment workload equivalencies

02

Overview of suggested assessment workload equivalencies

Estimates

The estimates on the following pages are based on you allocating **20% of the module credits to assessment** (but do recalculate should your programme allocate a greater proportion of module credits to assessment). Estimates indicate an **upper word count limit**:

- 30 hours in total for 15-credit modules
- 60 hours in total for 30-credit modules.

Although we have included 100% weighting, we would not normally recommend a single assessment, as this can be stressfully high-stakes for students and also may reduce opportunities for them to receive feedback in the course of the module.

The word counts in the following pages allow for all processes in preparing written work (e.g. planning, researching, writing, referencing, etc.). They do not include time allocated to independent study, e.g. the week-by-week reading/other class preparation which may nonetheless feed into the assessment task.

Estimates are not prescriptive – one size does not fit all. Please consider them in relation to the context of your discipline, your module, its learning outcomes, your assessment and your students.

Calculating assessment workload equivalence using the estimates

The estimates are intended as a starting point in your calculations. Check whether contextual factors make it a good idea to adjust the estimate. For example, innovative assessments may take students longer, as they need to get to grips with a new format and digital tool.

We have included some prompts to help you more accurately estimate the average time students will need to spend on completing the assessment, accounting for a number of factors:

- Student readiness for the assessment
- Research load and complexity of the material
- Additional elements
- Quality of output

The list of prompts is not exhaustive; additionally, consider discipline-specific factors when calculating an appropriate length/scope of an assessment. In all cases, break down the processes required by the assessment and estimate how long students will need to accomplish each stage.

Group-work outputs

If you ask a group of students to produce the assessment together, you will need to consider adjusting the allocated length. However, as UCL state, 'the length of a group assignment should not be a multiple of the suggested individual assignment length. Instead...consider a marginally higher (20%) length or duration.' See the University of Liverpool's Policy on Assessment of Group-Work (Appendix G, [COPA](#)) for further guidance on assessing group-work.

Assessments which include outputs in different formats

For example, you may ask students to submit a reflection on the process of creating an assessment, such as how they worked in a group to make a video, thus setting two assessments in one. Consult the written coursework section as well as the video section in order to allow time for students to accomplish both elements of the task.

Written Coursework

(excluding dissertations/capstone reports)

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Written Coursework

(excluding dissertations/capstone reports)

Consider the level when selecting your assessment word count – typically, but not necessarily, word counts ascend through Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. Note that the estimates below represent suggested upper limits.

15-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested word count (upper limit)	3,000 words	2,000 words	1,500 words
Corresponding student hours on task	30 hours	21 hours	15 hours @ 50%

30-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested word count (upper limit)	5,000 words	3,500 words	2,500 words
Corresponding student hours on task	60 hours	42 hours	30 hours @ 50%

Written coursework:

Dissertations and capstone reports/assessments

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Written coursework:

Dissertations and capstone reports/assessments

Dissertations and capstone assessments are typically Level 6 and Level 7. Often more scheduled class time is spent on supporting students with this assessment, or allowing them to work on it, hence the higher number of words per student hour on task.

	15	30
Module credits	15	30
Suggested word count (upper limit)	10,000 words	15,000 words
Corresponding student hours on task	60 hours	120 hours

Suggested factors to consider when estimating workload for written coursework

Consider reducing the assessment word count for each of the following factors that apply to the assessment task:

Student readiness for the assessment

- Students are unfamiliar with the assessment format and may need to process advice and exemplars in their own time

Research load and complexity of material

- Research-intensive for the level of study, considering disciplinary norms
 - if particularly research-light, consider increasing the word count
- Theoretically complex material for students' level of study
- Builds on a related formative assessment; students applying previous feedback

Additional elements

- Students create a primary artefact (e.g. carrying out research and presenting results in a graph in their written report)
- Significant amount of analytical work required (e.g. calculations, computer coding, etc.)

Quality of output

- Students required to condense research down into a concise form (fewer words, more time to produce)
- Presentational standards are particularly important (e.g. graphs/tables expected to be at 'publication standard')

Taking the nature of the task and your discipline into account, can you think of other reasons you might reduce, or even lengthen, the assessment length?

For written coursework that is produced through group work, please also see the note on group work outputs.

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Coursework (not primarily written)

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Coursework (not primarily written)

This category includes coursework that is not primarily written, but that is submitted within a document and can thus be calculated by page count, rather than word count. This kind of work might consist of diagrams, tables, infographics, architectural drawings, STEM laboratory results, multi-media portfolios, etc.

Calculating student time-on-task will require you to break down what the student will need to do to accomplish the task, estimating the time needed for each stage (see the section on [Other Assessments](#)) As a very rough guide, however, here are some estimates to help with your own calculations.

Consider the level when selecting your assessment page count – typically, but not necessarily, length ascends through Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. Note that the estimates below represent suggested upper limits.

15-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested page count (upper limit)	20 pages or equivalent	14 pages or equivalent	10 pages or equivalent
Corresponding student hours on task	30 hours	21 hours	15 hours

30-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested page count (upper limit)	35 pages or equivalent	25 pages or equivalent	18 pages or equivalent
Corresponding student hours on task	60 hours	42 hours	30 hours

Suggested factors to consider when estimating workload for coursework (not primarily written)

Consider reducing the assessment word count for each of the following factors that apply to the assessment task:

Student readiness for the assessment

- Students are unfamiliar with the assessment format and may need to process advice and exemplars in their own time
- Students are unfamiliar with the tools required (e.g. statistical software, visual presentation tools) and are not given scheduled class-time to learn to use them
- Students require significant time to creatively devise the output

Research load and complexity of material

- Research-intensive for the level of study, considering disciplinary norms
 - if particularly research-light, consider increasing the word count
- Theoretically complex material for students' level of study

Additional elements

- Significant amount of analytical work required (e.g. calculations, computer coding, etc.)

Quality of output

- Students required to condense research down into a concise form (fewer words, more time to produce)
- Presentational standards are particularly important (e.g. graphs/tables/illustrations expected to be at 'publication standard')

Taking the nature of the task and your discipline into account, can you think of other reasons you might reduce, or even lengthen, the assessment length or scope?

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Examinations: Face-to-face and online exams
(controlled conditions)

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Examinations: Face-to-face and online exams (controlled conditions)

These estimates may vary considerably from what happens within your discipline, given different types of exams, e.g. essay-based exams, short-answer exams, multiple choice exams, etc.

Consider the level when determining exam length – typically, but not necessarily, length ascends through Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. Note that the estimates below represent suggested upper limits.

15-credit module

Assessing a 15-credit module by a single examination (100%) is not recommended, unless students have received substantial formative tasks and feedback throughout the module.

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested upper limit exam length	3 hours	2 hours	1 hour
Student revision hours	27 hours	19 hours	14 hours

30-credit module

Assessing a 30-credit module by a single examination (100%) is not recommended.

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested upper limit for time completing the exam itself	3 hours	3 hours	3 hour
Student revision hours	57 hours	39 hours	27 hours

Examinations: Take-home papers or practical exams

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Examinations: Take-home papers or practical exams

15-credit module

Assessing a 15-credit module by a single examination (100%) is not recommended, unless students have received substantial formative tasks and feedback throughout the module.

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested upper limit exam completion time (usually within a minimum of a 24-hour period)	4 hours	3 hours	2 hour
Student revision hours	26 hours	18 hours	13 hours

30-credit module

Assessing a 30-credit module by a single examination (100%) is not recommended.

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested upper limit exam completion time (usually within a minimum of a 24-hour period)	5 hours	4 hours	3 hour
Student revision hours	55 hours	38 hours	27 hours

Suggested factors to consider when estimating workload for examinations

For essay-based exams, please also see the prompts in the [Written Coursework section](#).

Consider reducing the assessment word count for each of the following factors that apply to the assessment task:

Student readiness for the assessment

- Students need to revise everything, as opposed to being safely able to be more selective
- Students are unfamiliar with the assessment format and may need to process advice and exemplars in their own time
- Students are unfamiliar with the tools required (e.g. statistical software, visual presentation tools) and are not given scheduled class-time to learn to use them

Research load and complexity of material

- Students need to memorise a lot of factual material and/or quotations from disciplinary literature
- Research-intensive for the level of study, considering disciplinary norms
- Theoretically complex material for students' level of study

Taking the nature of the task and your discipline into account, can you think of other reasons you might reduce, or even lengthen, the examination's scope or length?

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Media productions

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Media productions

Media productions vary greatly in how long they will take students. Typically, edited live action videos will take longest, animations using a digital tool that supplies pre-drawn objects/characters (such as Powtoon) are likely to take a little less time, and recorded screencasts (often a recorded Powerpoint with voice-over) are likely to take the least time.

Unless technical proficiency is required by a learning outcome and taught on the module, the marking criteria are likely to focus primarily on the content (the points and arguments made) and it is important to guide your students about your expectations on this.

Effective videos are typically quite short, often between three and five minutes.

Consider the level when selecting your assessment length – typically, but not necessarily, assessment length ascends through Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. Note that the estimates below represent suggested upper limits.

15-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested length (upper limit)	10 minutes of content	6 minutes of content	4 minutes of content
Corresponding student hours on task	30 hours	21 hours	15 hours

30-credit module

A 12-minute video is not recommended.

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested length (upper limit)	12 minutes of content	7 minutes of content	5 minutes of content
Corresponding student hours on task	60 hours	42 hours	30 hours

These estimates are approximate. In calculating student time on task, you might break down the process of creating a video – we provide estimates for the typical processes involved in video-making on the next few pages. You will note that in some cases the estimated student hours on task above are lower than the total estimations in the subsequent pages. These pages try to anticipate all the processes that might be needed. Depending on the assessment you set, students may not need to accomplish all of these, or may need to fulfil additional processes.

While you will find it more complex to estimate student workload equivalence for video assessments, your students are likely to learn a great deal in the process of working on a well-designed video assessment and often engage deeply and enthusiastically.

We strongly recommend that you consult students following the assessment, asking how long they actually took to produce the video, and then adjust video length as appropriate for future iterations of the assessment/module. In CIE, we'd also be interested to hear how long assessments like these actually took the students so please share your [students' experience with us](#).

Estimating time on task to create a live-action edited video

Pre-Production

How long might students take to write the script?

Most video tasks require students to write and deliver a script. The following estimates are based on an average reading speed of 130 words per minute (a somewhat slow pace).

	3
Length of video	3 minutes
Number of words	390 words
Written coursework words-per-hour (rough average of c.85 words-per-hour)	4.5 hours

	5
Length of video	5 minutes
Number of words	650 words
Written coursework words-per-hour (rough average of c.85 words-per-hour)	8 hours

10	
Length of video	10 minutes
Number of words	1300 words
Written coursework words-per-hour (rough average of c.85 words-per-hour)	15 hours

12	
Length of video	12 minutes
Number of words	1560 words
Written coursework words-per-hour (rough average of c.85 words-per-hour)	18.5 hours

Bear in mind that in many cases a concise script, which distils material that would take many words in an essay, may take students longer to write/edit down; fewer words may take more time to produce.

How long might students take to complete the other pre-production tasks for a live-action edited video?

Not all of these processes may be required, but here are some rough estimates, which tend to estimate *minimum* time on task for non-experienced student film-makers.

See also the [reflective prompts](#), as students' familiarity with the format and technology is a particularly important factor.

Storyboarding/List of shots

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 1 hour	Estimated Time 1.5 hours	Estimated Time 2 hours	Estimated Time 2.5 hours

Location recce, lighting design, equipment planning, scheduling

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 3 hours	Estimated Time 4 hours	Estimated Time 5 hours	Estimated Time 5.5 hours

Casting, permissions, messaging

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 1.5 hours	Estimated Time 2 hours	Estimated Time 2.5 hours	Estimated Time 2.5 hours

Production

Set-up, testing, recording video and audio, taking photographs, sourcing images and music (if required)

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 4 hours	Estimated Time 6 hours	Estimated Time 8 hours	Estimated Time 10 hours

Post-Production

Editing, designing titles, creating simple animations, generating subtitles for accessibility

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 3.5 hours	Estimated Time 4.5 hours	Estimated Time 5 hours	Estimated Time 6 hours

In total, then, should all these elements of the process be required, we estimate that the minimum hours for creating live action edited video would range between 17.5-45 hours. This makes it likely that a video of this kind would need a fairly high assessment weighting and/or be best suited as a 30-credit module assessment.

See also the [reflective prompts](#) to help you estimate time on task more closely.

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Estimating time on task to create an animated video using a digital tool

The following estimates relate to students using an animation tool that offers pre-drawn characters and objects as well as a range of choices for introducing text and transitioning between scenes/slides.

How long might students take to write the script?

Most video tasks require students to write and deliver a script. The following estimates are based on an average reading speed of 130 words per minute (a somewhat slow pace).

	3	5	10	12
Length of video	3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Number of words	390 words	650 words	1300 words	1560 words
Written coursework words-per-hour (rough average of c.85 words-per-hour)	4.5 hours	8 hours	15 hours	18.5 hours

Bear in mind that in many cases a concise script, which distils material that would take many words in an essay, may take students longer to write/edit down; fewer words may take more time to produce.

How long might students spend on devising the storyboard, finding ways to both visually and textually represent ideas?

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 1.5 hours	Estimated Time 2 hours	Estimated Time 3.5 hours	Estimated Time 4 hours

How long might students spend on constructing scenes/slides by selecting characters and objects and text items, creating, sequencing and synchronising animations?

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 3 hours	Estimated Time 4 hours	Estimated Time 5 hours	Estimated Time 6 hours

How long might students take to record the voiceover and generate subtitles for accessibility?

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 2 hours	Estimated Time 3 hours	Estimated Time 4 hours	Estimated Time 5 hours

In total, then, we estimate that the minimum hours for creating an animation video would range between 11–33.5 hours, but see also the [reflective prompts](#) to help you estimate more closely.

Estimating time on task to create a recorded narrated screencast video

Typically, students will need to devise, research and create a set of slides, create a script and record the presentation. This may take longer than a traditional 'live' presentation for two reasons:

1. students will likely wish to re-record their narration of each slide until they have it perfect
2. often recorded screencasts work best when more work is put into the visual elements of the slides, including small animations, to compensate for the lack of live 'presence' afforded by live presentations.

How long might students take to write the script?

Most video tasks require students to write and deliver a script. The following estimates are based on an average reading speed of 130 words per minute (a somewhat slow pace).

	3	5	10	12
Length of video	3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Number of words	390 words	650 words	1300 words	1560 words
Written coursework words-per-hour (rough average of c.85 words-per-hour)	4.5 hours	8 hours	15 hours	18.5 hours

Bear in mind that in many cases a concise script, which distils material that would take many words in an essay, may take students longer to write/edit down; fewer words may take more time to produce.

How long might students spend on constructing slides, including sourcing relevant images, creating simple animations, formatting text, etc.?

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 2 hours	Estimated Time 3 hours	Estimated Time 4 hours	Estimated Time 5 hours

How long might students take to record the voiceover and generate subtitles for accessibility?

3	5	10	12
3 minutes	5 minutes	10 minutes	12 minutes
Estimated Time 2 hours	Estimated Time 3 hours	Estimated Time 4 hours	Estimated Time 5 hours

In total, then, we estimate that the minimum hours for creating recorded narrated screencast would range between 8.5–28.5 hours, but see also the [reflective prompts](#) to help you estimate more closely.

Suggested factors to consider when estimating workload for media productions

If you are offering students a choice of video format, consider specifying an appropriate video length for each format and explaining the differences to the students. Consider different expectations of video length for each format, or offer students a range of acceptable video lengths.

In terms of the content of the videos, see also the prompts in the [Written Coursework](#) section

Consider reducing the assessment's video length for each of the following factors that apply to the assessment task:

Student readiness for the assessment

- Students are unfamiliar with the assessment format and may need to process advice and exemplars in their own time
- Students are unfamiliar with the digital tools required (e.g. editing software, animation tools) and are not given scheduled class-time to learn to use them
- Students require significant time to creatively devise the output

Research load and complexity of material

- Research-intensive for the level of study, considering disciplinary norms
 - if particularly research-light, consider increasing the word count
- Theoretically complex material for students' level of study

Quality of output

- Students are creating a live-action, edited video
- Students need significant time to creatively devise the output
- Students are required to condense research down into a concise form (fewer words, more time to produce)
- The module learning outcomes and marking criteria mean that you will be assessing the students' technical proficiency and/or visual communication choices

Taking the nature of the task and your discipline into account, can you think of other reasons you might reduce, or even lengthen, the assessment length?

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Presentations

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Presentations

The content required by particular presentation assessments makes it difficult to estimate a realistic generic estimate of how long students will spend on the task.

Individual presentations

15-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested length (upper limit)	10-15 minutes of content	7-10 minutes of content	5-7 minutes of content
Corresponding student hours on task	30 hours	21 hours	15 hours

30-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested length (upper limit)	20 minutes of content	14-19 minutes of content	5-14 minutes of content
Corresponding student hours on task	60 hours	42 hours	30 hours

Group Presentations

While it might seem logical to multiply the length of an individual presentation by the number of group members, this is not recommended. Students will spend time on the group work itself, e.g. forming a group/team, negotiating objectives, distributing roles, etc. as well as devoting time to preparing the presentation. Additionally, an 80-minute presentation produced by 4 students, for example, seems unwieldy to produce and assess.

UCL suggest adding about 20% more time to the length of an individual presentation when calculating the length of a group presentation. However, you will need to take the number of students in groups into account to ensure that this will be workable and that you will be able to fairly assess each member of the group.

15-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested length (upper limit)	12–20 minutes of content	9–15 minutes of content	6–10 minutes of content
Corresponding student hours on task	30 hours	21 hours	15 hours

30-credit module

	100%	70%	50%
Weighting	100%	70%	50% or below
Suggested length (upper limit)	25 minutes of content	17-25 minutes of content	6-17 minutes of content
Corresponding student hours on task	60 hours	42 hours	30 hours

Suggested factors to consider when estimating workload for presentations

Consider reducing the presentation's length for each of the following factors that apply to the assessment task:

Student readiness for the assessment

- Students are unfamiliar with the assessment format and may need to process advice and exemplars in their own time
- Students will need to use unfamiliar digital tools (e.g. poster design tools, graphical tools), without developing familiarity in-class
- If it is a group presentation, members do not yet know each other and will need to use time outside of class to do so

Research load and complexity of material

- In a group presentation, the task is more than usually complex, requiring members to meet more than, say, 2-3 times for an hour or more
- Research-intensive for the level of study, considering disciplinary norms
 - if particularly research-light, consider increasing the word count
- Theoretically complex material for students' level of study

Additional elements

- Students will be assessed and/or required to peer-assess on the process of group work, as well as its product, the presentation itself
- A poster presentation which students will need to research, design and construct in addition to planning their presentation
- Students create a primary artefact (e.g. carrying out research and presenting results in a graph in their slides)
- Significant amount of analytical work required (e.g. calculations, computer coding, etc.)

Quality of output

- Presentational standards are particularly important (e.g. graphs/tables expected to be at 'publication standard')

Taking the nature of the task and your discipline into account, can you think of other reasons you might reduce, or even lengthen, the assessment length?

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Other assessment formats

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Other assessment formats

There are many potential assessment formats, often innovative and authentic, that have not been covered by this guide.

We suggest a five-stage method to help you estimate the number of hours students will need to spend on your particular assessment task

Stage 1

Itemize each different process students will need to undertake in order to complete the assessment and estimate how long each will take, drawing on your own knowledge of your discipline and its practices. For instance, here are a few examples of processes, though there are potentially many more, particularly discipline-specific:

Process/stage	Initial Estimate	Final Estimate
Devising/planning		
Initial research		
Formulating and refining a research question		
Experimenting with digital tool		
Constructing X		
Annotating		
Testing X		
Interviewing		
Writing up		
Editing		
Presenting		
Peer reviewing first draft of the output		
Proof-reading/finalising		
Total student hours on task:		

Stage 2

Consider reducing the assessment length for each of the following factors that apply to the assessment task:

Student readiness for the assessment

- Students are unfamiliar with the assessment format and may need to process advice and exemplars in their own time
- Students will need to use unfamiliar digital tools without developing skills in-class

Research load and complexity of material

- Research-intensive for the level of study, considering disciplinary norms
- Theoretically complex material for students' level of study

Additional elements

- Students create a more than one output (e.g. a product design and a marketing pitch)
- Significant amount of analytical work required (e.g. calculations, computer coding, etc.)

Quality of output

- Students required to condense research down into a concise form (fewer words, more time to produce)
- Presentational standards are particularly important (e.g. graphs/tables expected to be at 'publication standard')

Taking the nature of the task and your discipline into account, can you think of other reasons you might reduce, or even lengthen, the assessment length or scope?

Stage 3

Add up the total hours for this assessment with those of the other module assessments, taking weightings into account. Are you over- or under-loading students? See the table below. If so, consider adjusting 'length' of outputs accordingly.

15-credit

	20%	25%	30%
Proportion of hours allocated to assessment	20%	25%	30%
Notional total student hours spent on module	150 hours	150 hours	150 hours
Notional student assessment workload	30 hours	37.5 hours	45 hours

30-credit

	20%	25%	30%
Proportion of hours allocated to assessment	20%	25%	30%
Notional total student hours spent on module	300 hours	300 hours	300 hours
Notional student assessment workload	60 hours	75 hours	90 hours

Stage 4

Check that the hours on task are proportionate in terms of the Learning Outcome or Outcomes the task assesses. For instance, if you were asking students to spend half their notional assessment workload on a task that assesses just a tiny part of one of the four module learning outcomes, you might consider whether that was justifiable.

Stage 5

Check with colleagues teaching modules at the same level. Is there parity between what each of you is asking students to do in terms of the hours they are estimated to spend on the assessments?

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