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6.1 Types of assessment

Your distance learning material will include full details of the specific assessment for the module you are studying.

Assessment may consist of any of the following elements or a combination of them:

- Practical skills assessment
- Oral presentation
- Unseen written examination
- Coursework (including case study, reflective assignments and other written assignments).

**Practical skills assessment**

This assessment tests whether you can apply your knowledge to a practical situation. Within a specified scenario, you may be questioned on diagnosis, treatment and management issues. You may also be required to demonstrate equipment, to explain a procedure or results, or to teach the most effective way to administer a specific medication. The practical exercise will vary, depending on the nature of the module; use of communication skills will be a key part of any oral assessment.

**Oral Presentation**

This is an alternative form of practical skills assessment. It is intended to assess your practical skills and application of knowledge to clinical situations. You will be required to make a brief oral presentation to one of your fellow students who will then give you feedback on the content of your presentation. You will be given the topic in advance and time to prepare your presentation. An Education for Health Trainer will also be present in order to give you guidance if needed and also to assess your presentation. Typical topics include patient education, common inhaler devices or explaining treatment options.

**Unseen written examination**

There are various types of unseen written examinations:

1. Practice management paper. This is an unseen written examination paper which describes a developing clinical situation on which questions are asked. You will be required to analyse the situation and make appropriate and safe clinical decisions about what to do. Your answers must demonstrate your understanding of the disease area in question and show how you would use this knowledge to manage patients effectively.

2. Essay style unseen questions. These pose a question or statement for discussion, in which you can demonstrate your understanding and analysis of the area under debate.

3. Short answer questions. These comprise a number of short questions requiring you to apply your knowledge to a specific topic. They do not require essay style answers and note from is acceptable.
If the assessment of your module includes these types of examination paper, examples are included in your learning materials and you will also have the opportunity to practise in the course of your studies.

**Coursework**

Written coursework is required for certain modules. This may take the form of:

- A case study based on a specific patient(s)
- A reflective piece
- An answer to a given patient management scenario
- A service delivery plan
- A research project
- A literature review
- A portfolio
- Other written task or assignment.

Your coursework assignments should reflect best or evidence-based practice rather than anecdote or professional opinion.

**Please observe the word limit specified for the work. You are permitted a margin of 10% (+/-). Appendices and Reference lists are not included in the word limit. Tables, where appropriate, count as one word. References within the text do contribute to the word count. Breaching the word count will incur a loss of marks.**

**Ethics**

As a health professional you are bound by a code of conduct imposed by the body which governs your particular profession. This is just a reminder that during the course of your studies you must at all times behave ethically. For example, it is not acceptable, and may render you liable to disciplinary action, if you disclose details which may amount to a breach of confidentiality. Therefore, in coursework, in any other type of assessment or during any teaching session, you must be careful not to disclose information which could identify a patient, such as the name of your patient, your work-place or its principals.

**Further help and support with coursework**

You will find further tips on how to approach coursework in Section 7. We provide specific criteria and guidelines for individual modules in your learning materials.

You can also get help and advice from the Student Support Service (Section 3) if you need it.

It may be possible for you to send an outline or plan of the work that you propose to submit in order to receive comments. Please note however that only outlines or plans will be considered and commented upon. We cannot provide comments on anything resembling a finished piece of work. In order to be able to comment meaningfully on your outline, please allow at least two weeks prior to the submission date.
Feedback

Examiners give guidance to students about ways to improve their coursework. This feedback is particularly useful for preparing for your next submission; if there are areas where you would like further clarification, please contact our Student Support Services, who will direct your call to someone who will be able to help.
6.2 Assessment criteria

You will be assessed on the clinical information contained in the distance learning materials provided by Education for Health.

We review and update our learning materials regularly, but knowledge in the field of health care is constantly evolving. Sometimes, therefore, changes may occur during the course of your module – for example, the recommended treatment for certain conditions may change when new guidelines or treatments are introduced. If this happens, Education for Health will make every effort to bring the latest information to your attention, for example by covering it during study days, issuing you with additional materials, or referring you to sources of information. You will certainly not be penalised for mentioning the new information in your assessment, but, equally, you will not fail by not mentioning it because your assessment will be based on the information that was current when your learning materials were written.

Module assessment

Full details of the assessment criteria which apply to the module you have chosen to study are enclosed with the module learning materials.

Pass mark

The pass mark for each module and for each of the programmes overall is 40% and you are required to achieve at least 40% for each element of the module assessment. Please refer to the module specification at the front of your learning materials for specific requirements for each module.
6.3 Impartiality

We use student reference numbers in examinations and assessments to ensure anonymity and to avoid any possibility of bias.
6.4 Coursework deadlines and extension of time

If your module assessment includes coursework, full details of the topic(s) and deadlines for submitting your work will be provided with your learning materials.

In fairness to your fellow students and also to those who mark your work, we expect you to make every effort to send your work in sufficient time to reach us by the deadline.

If you are struggling to complete coursework by the due date contact the Student Support Service. A short extension of time (up to 14 days) may be allowed in certain circumstances for summative coursework. There are no extensions granted for formative coursework. Please note that where extensions are granted it may not be possible to issue results and feedback with the rest of your group.

If you wish to apply for additional time beyond this, you must contact the exams team to discuss your specific exceptional circumstances in support of the request. Please note that pressure of work or holidays are not normally considered a sufficient reason.

Coursework received after the original (or agreed extended) deadline will normally be given zero marks. In such circumstances you will be given feedback on your work but you will not be awarded a mark or grade. This constitutes a fail, and you would be required to resubmit the coursework. In the event of failure by non-submission, resubmitted work is usually awarded a maximum of 40%.

Use plastic pockets to hold copies of leaflets etc. Do not use plastic pockets anywhere else! In particular do not put each page of the text into a separate plastic pocket. It will only make the marker’s job harder because they will need to remove them all in order to write their comments on your study.

Do not bind your work unless specifically asked to do so.

Many students send their coursework by registered post, but, if not, please get a proof of posting certificate from the post office, and ensure you have used sufficient postage.
6.5 Special circumstances before or during assessment

If you are aware of any special circumstances (such as illness or disability) which may affect your ability to study or to sit an examination, please advise us. We would recommend you do so on the application form that you complete initially and we will acknowledge it in writing. Otherwise, please contact the Head of Academic Studies when you begin your module to discuss how we can help.

If such circumstances arise during your studies, please contact the Head of Academic Studies or the Student Support Service as soon as possible. If, as a result, you need special arrangements to be made for your assessment, we normally need at least 28 days notice before the date of your assessment so that we can make the arrangements. Alternatively, you may be able to postpone your assessment to a later date.

If, during the course of any part of the assessment, circumstances arise which may affect your result, such as sudden illness, you must report this to the Education for Health trainer at the examination venue. The trainer will document this information on a specific form and attach it to your examination papers. This form is available for all examinations.

Where you are unable to attend an examination due to illness or extenuating circumstances or where special circumstances arise during the course of an examination, the relevant Examination Board has the power to decide that you are ‘deemed not to have sat’ the examination. This means that it will not count as an attempt and you will have the opportunity to sit the examination on another occasion. Please note that you may need to produce evidence in support of this, such as a medical certificate or doctor’s letter.
6.6 Conduct in examinations and assessment

Education for Health has strict rules on cheating and other misconduct in assessment. Any allegations of cheating or misconduct in examinations and/or coursework will be considered by the Examinations Board. If such a case is found proved, the candidates involved will be deemed to have failed the examinations. Such candidates will not normally be permitted to take the examination on a subsequent occasion.

Definitions

Cheating in written examinations includes:

1. Taking or attempting to take unauthorised material into the examination room or possessing such material in that room. Unauthorised material is any material not specifically authorised by Education for Health, its invigilator or examiner.
2. Aiding or attempting to aid another candidate or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate or any other person.
3. Consulting or attempting to consult any books, memoranda, notes or any similar material while temporarily outside the examination room during the period of an examination.

Misconduct also includes behaviour in the examination room which, in the opinion of the invigilator, causes or is likely to cause annoyance to other candidates. Mobile phones or similar devices must be turned off for the duration of the assessment.

Cheating in other forms of assessment (such as coursework) includes:

1. Representing the work of others as one’s own (this includes submitting work which has been written in whole or in part with other people, or which has been copied in its entirety or in part from the work of others without acknowledgement). This is known as plagiarism (see Section 5.3 for guidance on how to avoid plagiarism).
2. Falsifying data
3. Submitting work already submitted for other courses or modules (self-plagarism).

Procedure

Allegations of misconduct in assessment shall be reported to the Director of Education and Research who will, normally within six weeks of receiving such notification:

- Provide an account of the allegation to the student concerned
- Inform the student of their right to make representations in response to the allegations.

Where the Director of Education and Research determines that there is evidence of misconduct s/he shall:

- Notify the student of how the matter will proceed and of their rights, including the right to be represented
- Refer the matter to the Examination Board.
The Examination Board shall hear evidence, including any representations made by the student. If the case is found proved, the candidates involved will be deemed to have failed the examinations. Such candidates will not normally be permitted to take the examination on a subsequent occasion.

A person found guilty of misconduct by the Examination Board has a right of appeal against such a finding to an Appeal Board which will conduct a review of the matter. The Appeal Board will be established by the Chief Executive under the delegated authority of the Academic Board. Written notice of such an appeal must be given to the Director of Education within ten days of the date of the letter informing the student of the Examination Board’s decision.

Where a finding of misconduct is confirmed by an Appeal Board, the student will have a right to make final appeal to the Open University Validation Services. In this instance, the appeal should be submitted within three months of the outcome of the Appeal Board and in writing to: The Director, Open University Validation Services, 44 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4LL. The matter will then be dealt with in accordance with the Open University’s regulations.
6.7 The Role of External Examiners

There are two external examiners approved by the Open University in respect of the BSc (Hons) degree and the Diploma of Higher Education programmes. They are impartial experts in the field concerned and also experienced examiners. Their primary purpose is to ensure that justice is done to the individual students and that the standard of the Open University’s validated awards is maintained.

In order to carry out these responsibilities, External Examiners judge students impartially on the basis of the work submitted for assessment and compare the performance of students with that of others undertaking comparable programmes of higher education elsewhere. They consider subject benchmarks and qualification descriptors, as appropriate. Their specific functions include:

- Approving the form and content of proposed examination papers, coursework and other assessments
- Agreeing to proposed changes to assessment regulations
- Attending examiners’ meetings and having access to all assessed work
- Seeing samples of students’ work in each category of award, and for failure, in order to ensure that assessment criteria have been interpreted correctly and that there is parity of assessment across the cohort.

External examiners have the right to moderate the marks awarded by Assessment Committee where this is within the regulations for the programme and does not bias the overall assessment or cause unfairness to individual candidates. They also have the right to meet students and, where appropriate, conduct a viva voce (oral) examination of any candidate.

The Assessment Committee operates in a similar way at module level. The Assessment Committee consists of academic and clinical representatives who meet to discuss individual student marks once papers have been marked by an experienced marker who is also an expert in the relevant field. Marks determined by the Assessment Committee remain provisional until confirmed by the External Examiners at the programme examination board.
6.8 Results

To ensure that your work is marked fairly and accurately, we follow the guidelines set out by the Open University.

All assessed elements of your module are marked by experienced markers who are specialists in that particular subject area. These marks are then moderated by the Assessment Committee to ensure that there is equity of marking both within a cohort and between multiple cohorts of the same module.

Following the Assessment Committee we will issue you with a provisional mark. We aim to do this within three months of the submission of your final piece of coursework. Although the mark is provisional, your employer will usually accept it as evidence that you have undertaken the module. Please ask them to contact our examinations team directly if this causes any problems.

All provisional marks are reviewed by the External Examiners, who meet every six months. In exceptional cases they may recommend a change to the mark that has been issued, but this does not happen very often. In the unlikely event that your mark is changed we will write to you with your amended mark. Once the External Examiners have finalised your mark we apply to the Open University for your certificate which is then posted to you.

We recommend that you keep your letter and certificate together as confirmation of the mark that you received.

Please note that to protect your confidentiality it is not possible for us to give results over the phone.
6.9 Unsuccessful candidates

If you are unsuccessful in your assessment, the Examinations Department will notify you of this. You will also be sent a form to enable you to re-take the assessment on payment of the relevant fee. There is a minimum fee of £50 per element of assessment, but if you contact the Examinations Department, they will be able to give you details of the fees for your re-assessment. Please note that, if the distance learning materials have been updated in the meantime, you will need to purchase the new materials, as you will be assessed on the basis of these. There will be an additional charge for this which is currently £25.

If you are unsuccessful, we strongly encourage you to have another attempt. Often returning to study and doing written assessments can be daunting, and you may need extra guidance to restructure your work. Use the feedback provided by the marker to analyse where you may have gone wrong, and then contact the Student Support Service (Section 3). They will link you to a Clinical Lecturer for further feedback on your assessment and for advice and support. If you can find out which areas of study you need to concentrate on, this will give you a better chance of success at your next attempt. Studies show that students who contact us for guidance have a much greater chance of succeeding in their re-assessment.

The following will normally constitute failure in assessment:

- Achieving an overall mark below the pass mark
- Failing to achieve the minimum mark for a particular element
- Failing to attend for assessment (failure by absence)
- Failing to submit required coursework by the due date without prior approval of an extension of time (failure by non-submission).

You are allowed three attempts in total. If you fail a module three times, you have the right to put forward a case to the Appeal Board to be allowed an exceptional fourth attempt. If this application fails you will be required to withdraw from the module and will not normally be allowed to register for that module at a future date.

Please note that resubmissions are normally capped at 40%, although you will be given information on the level you have achieved in the resubmission.

This section gives you guidance on how to start your coursework and tips on good ways to approach specific elements such as:

- Short answer questions
- Reflective assignments
- Case studies