



Assessment Choice

Preliminary Findings and Next Steps

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Pilot overview

Rationale

- Pedagogic, inclusive strategy to assessment design
- Give students agency: play to their strengths
- Support Track A hybrid in our AI guidance

Parameters and support

- Original and equivalent instruments must assess the same learning outcomes, to the same standards
- Module Lead paired with a Learning Designer

Scope of pilot

- 2024/25 = 20 UG and PG modules, 7 x L5s, 8 x L6s, 5 x L7s, over 500 students
- 2025/26 = 13 UG modules, 4 x L4, 5 x L5, 4 x L6, over 200 students

Example 1

Business and Law Level 6 module

Original assessment

1,500-word report that critically discusses one of the following statements:

1. Marketers have a fundamental responsibility to society and its consumers from a moral perspective within the context of big data
2. Marketing that utilises big data cannot be considered sustainable marketing
3. Consumers should take personal accountability for their data, it is not within the realms of a marketer's role to be concerned with consumer privacy
4. As AI and Machine Learning is mostly independent of human intervention, its use in marketing can be considered ethical
5. Big Data use in Marketing can be considered ethical

Equivalent assessment

15-minute group podcast on one of the following statements:

1. Marketers have a fundamental responsibility to society and its consumers from a moral perspective within the context of big data
2. Marketing that utilises big data cannot be considered sustainable marketing
3. Consumers should take personal accountability for their data, it is not within the realms of a marketer's role to be concerned with consumer privacy
4. As AI and Machine Learning is mostly independent of human intervention, its use in marketing can be considered ethical
5. Big Data use in Marketing can be considered ethical

Example 2

Science & Health Level 6 module

Original assessment	Equivalent assessment
2,500-word academic journal style review of a particular topic via a deep dive into the relevant peer-reviewed literatures.	• 800-word document including: Title, Abstract, Conclusions/Key Findings And also: All numbered sub-headings (listed), All Figures (with captions) & FULL reference list. AND • 12-minute face-to-face oral examination (viva voce)

Research questions and methodology

1. What influenced students' choices?
 2. What were the performance differences?
 3. Were there significant demographic differences?
- Mixed-methods evaluation across two years
 - Evidence drawn from student and staff surveys, Moodle gradebook, SITS, interviews with Module Leads
 - Research Assistant used descriptive statistics to analyse patterns in choice and performance

RQ1: What influenced choice?

Individual factors, staff guidance, confidence and flexibility

- 44% of female students selected the equivalent assessment compared with 10% of male students
- Students with disabilities were more likely than students without disclosed disabilities to select the equivalent assessment
- 64% of students with caring responsibilities selected the equivalent assessment

RQ1: What influenced choice?

Individual factors, staff guidance, confidence and flexibility

- 60% of students who reported high module lead encouragement selected the equivalent assessment
- Students who regarded the equivalent assessment as more flexible were 3 times more likely to choose it
- Choice shaped by module context ranging from 53% in BAL to 82% in SAH
- 62% of students who selected the equivalent assessment reported that they had discussed their choice with peers before making their decision

RQ1: What influenced choice?

Choice between the original assessment and the equivalent assessment was influenced primarily by **disability, staff guidance, confidence, perceived flexibility and caring responsibilities**, rather than by academic preference alone.

Conclusion for RQ 1

Students did not choose solely based on "abstract preference". Choice was shaped by:

- disability and access needs
- staff encouragement and explanation
- confidence and perceived flexibility
- caring responsibilities
- gender, module design and peer influence

RQ2: What were the differences in performance?

Students generally performed as well or better in the equivalent assessment

- Students who selected the equivalent assessment were 67% more likely to pass than peers who selected the original assessment
- Performance differences were not universal across modules: some showed strong gains, while others showed small, absent, or even negative gains

RQ2: What were the differences in performance?

Positive performance differences

- Strongest positive performance signals associated with students with disabilities
- White British males aged 18-24 who selected equivalent assessment showed strong performance advantage

RQ2: What were the differences in performance?

- Strongest overall outcomes (best grades) appeared where uptake of the equivalent assessment was moderate rather than extreme
- Some students did not always choose the assessment instrument that best matched their strengths or level of preparation
- Weaker gains related to unfamiliar formats, unclear expectations, or insufficient scaffolding

RQ2: What were the differences in performance?

The impact of the equivalent assessment was generally positive or non-detrimental.

Conclusion for RQ 2

The equivalent assessment often produced equal or better performance, but success is heavily dependent on:

- Module design
- Student preparedness and confidence
- Scaffolding
- Uptake remained balanced and supported

RQ3: Were there significant demographic differences?

Pattern was intersectional rather than uniform

- White British males aged 18-24 show a strong positive performance difference
- White British females aged 25-30 showed a substantial negative difference
- 44% of female student selected the equivalent assessment compared to 10% of male students
- A higher proportion of minority ethnic students (aggregated) selected the equivalent assessment (42%) than White British students (26%)

RQ3: Were there significant demographic differences?

- Age was not a strong predictor of choosing the equivalent assessment
- White British males showed strong performance advantage when selecting equivalent assessment
- White British females aged 25-30 were the only subgroup showing substantial negative performance when selecting the equivalent assessment
- Asian males aged 25-30 with no caring responsibilities performed particularly well in original assessment
- 64% of students with caring responsibilities selected equivalent assessment

RQ3: Were there significant demographic differences?

The pattern was intersectional rather than uniform. No single characteristic explains the findings. Outcomes emerged from the interaction of multiple factors.

Conclusion for RQ 3

- There were clear differences in both uptake and outcomes, especially around gender and disability
- Equivalent assessments were especially valuable for some groups in some contexts
- Weaker outcomes occurred where confidence and scaffolding were limited

Overall conclusion

- Assessment choice supported inclusion
- Students often performed as well as or better in equivalent assessment, but effect was not universal and depended on module context
- Staff guidance and scaffolding among strongest influences on both uptake and outcomes
- Assessment choice most effective when embedded as inclusive pedagogic strategy

Recommendations

Design assessments aligned to the learning outcomes but offer students freedom in how they demonstrate them.

- Strongest performance outcomes appeared where uptake of the equivalent assessment was **moderate** (40-60%)
- **Prepare** students for all assessment instruments - "original" and "equivalent"
- Recognise that choice is **context** dependent: module design, cohort readiness and course scaffolding all matter
- **Do not just offer choice. Support decision-making**