

Assessment at the UOC

Teachers' support guide

UOC

eLearning
Innovation
Center

Universitat Oberta
de Catalunya

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Introduction

The UOC's learning model is based on a competency acquisition system that is both continuous and formative, and is carried out online. Its assessment system is also based on this model. Thinking about assessment entails thinking about the design of assessment activities which are also learning activities, which enable students to use and develop different competencies. Furthermore, it involves planning and designing the support actions to be carried out by teaching staff and the type of feedback to be provided.

This document sets out the main characteristics of the UOC's assessment model, in which students must play an active role. The focus is not only on final results but also on the learning progress that students achieve through continuous learning activities.

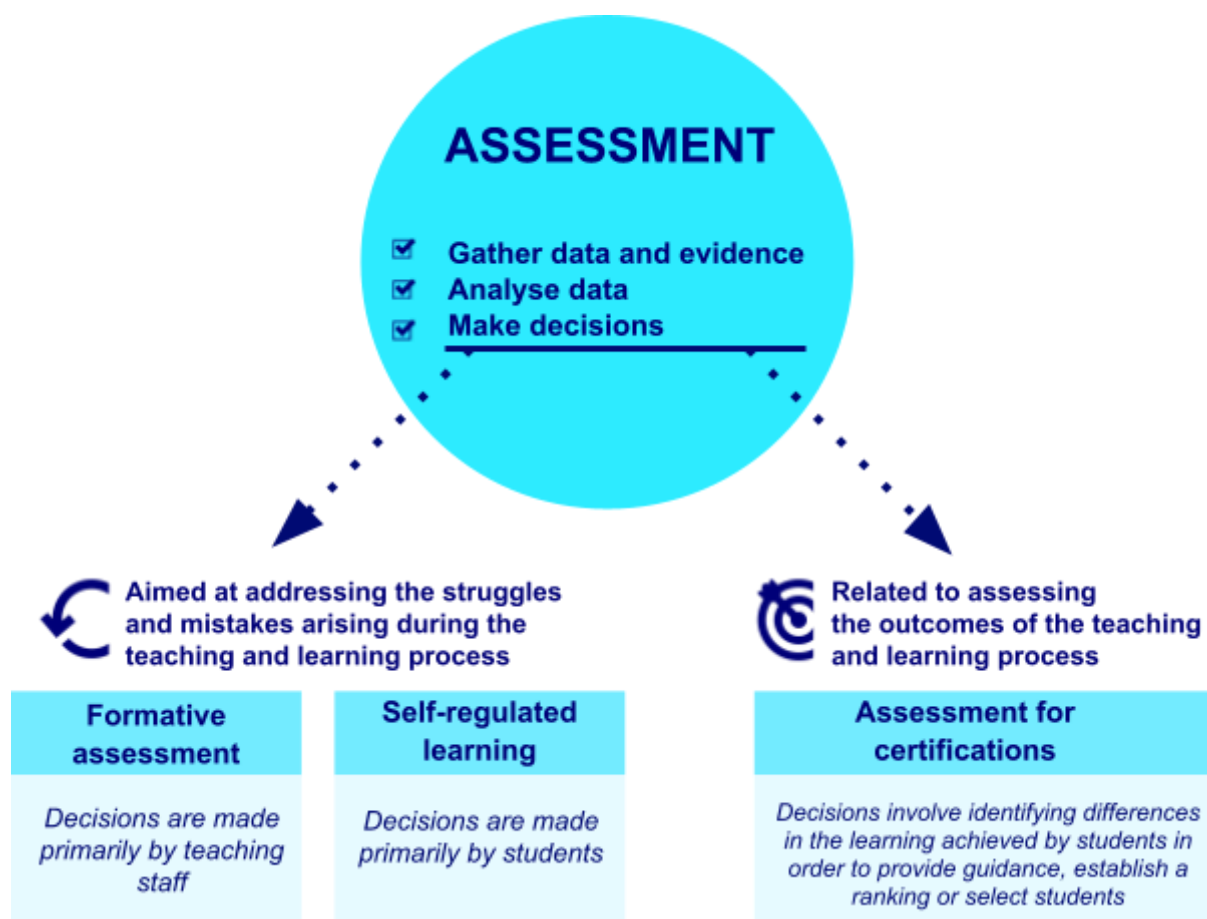
The wider context of this document is the gradual, ongoing transformation of the UOC's assessment systems, a process that is key to the future of our educational model.

Assessment basics: why, when and who?

Why do we assess?

Our assessment design must enable teaching staff to define and apply the most appropriate strategies as students advance in their learning. It must also enable them to ascertain the competency levels achieved. Similarly, in a learning model that requires their active involvement, assessment is key to students' learning (Sanmartí, 2020).

According to this vision, **assessment serves several functions**:



The functions of assessment. Adaptation from Sanmartí (2020).

The UOC's assessment model is characterized by its clear dual function: **formative and for certification**. It is considered **formative** because:

- a. it is applied **continuously** over time;
- b. it includes **various types of activities** based on a set of defined learning outcomes;
- c. it promotes **student progress** by setting activities that follow a certain progression;
and
- d. it uses **formative and personalized feedback**.

Assessment at the UOC also has a **certification** function, as the various assessment models applied throughout our degrees serve to provide proof of the learning achieved in each course.

When?

There are different types of assessment, based on their **timing**:

Initial or diagnostic assessment	This is carried out before the start of the learning process to identify students' prior knowledge or initial competency level, and thereby helps guide subsequent actions.
<i>Example</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Initial discussion on some of the concepts to be worked on during the course. → Initial questionnaire to establish students' ICT skills.
Continuous or formative assessment	This is done on an ongoing basis throughout the learning process. Students are given feedback on the development of their competencies to make them more aware of their own learning process. It also tells teaching staff what students are learning in order to inform their decision-making during the teaching and learning process.
<i>Example</i>	→ Continuous assessment activities are the clearest example of this type of assessment.
Summative assessment	This is the assessment of students after the end of the learning process. It is also known as <i>final assessment</i> . It is used to assess learning outcomes but cannot be used to monitor the learning process and act accordingly. It usually leads to a formal qualification or certification of a given skill.
<i>Example</i>	→ Moodle final assessment test to be done by students individually and within a time limit at the end of the course.

Who?

Based on the person carrying out the assessment, there is also a distinction between:

Self-appraisal

Students individually assess their own competencies or work based on previously established criteria. This encourages self-reflection on the learning process and a critical approach in relation to their own abilities.

Example → Questionnaire set at the start and end of the course to identify students' digital skill level.

Peer assessment

Students assess each other's work based on previously established criteria. This way, each student both provides and receives useful information about the learning process. This type of assessment also encourages students to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, critically analyse their peers' work based on well-founded criteria, and gradually acquire competencies.

Example → A student is tasked with assessing a classmate's work based on a checklist and the teacher's guidance. They must then incorporate the feedback provided by another classmate into their own work.

Instructor assessment

This type of assessment is made by a member of the educational community who is not a student. This is usually a teaching staff member, a tutor or an expert.

Example → The assessment of a continuous assessment activity by course instructors based on objective assessment criteria.
→ The assessment of a final project by an assessment committee.



A distinction must be made between **assessing for grading** and **assessing for learning**.

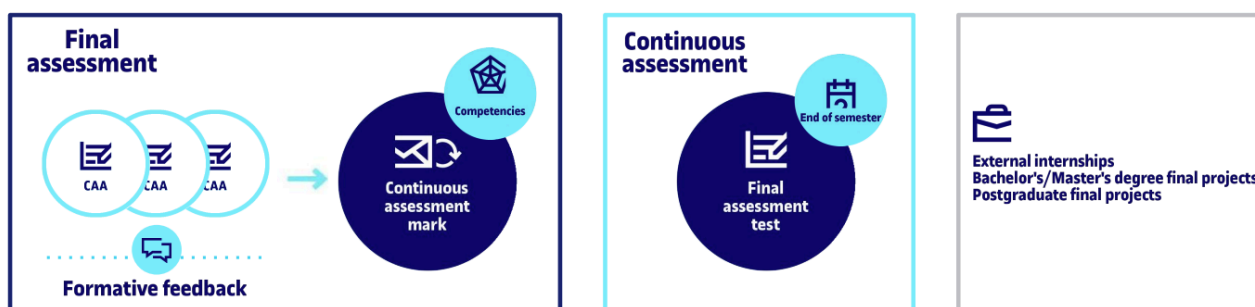
The UOC's assessment models

At the UOC, assessment should be a flexible and feasible process. Taking a flexible approach to assessment enables different pathways to be established to suit students' individual paces and interests. Assessment must be feasible for students (both in each single course and considering their other courses), for coordinating professors (workable design and coordination), for course instructors (achievable workload) and for the university itself (from a financial and organizational point of view).



However, apart from the principles underlying the nature of assessment at the UOC, which are specific to our institution, some criteria are common to all universities. These can be found in Spain's Official State Gazette and form the basis for the UOC **Academic Regulations**¹.

Assessment at the UOC is based on a dual **continuous and final assessment** model. **Continuous assessment** may be carried out through continuous assessment activities alone or in combination with final assessment tests, external internships or final projects (done at the end of the degree programme). **Final assessment** is carried out by means of final assessment tests. The assessment model for each course is set each semester and can be found in the course plan.



Continuous and final assessment at the UOC.

Broadly speaking, there are three **combinations based on the two models**:

¹ UOC Academic Regulations

<https://seu-electronica.uoc.edu/en/regulations-agreements/academic-research>

**1 Continuous
Assessment**



**2 Continuous Assessment +
Final Assessment**



**3 Final
Assessment**



Assessment model combinations.

There is no single learning programme or assessment model for all courses. Some courses can be passed with only continuous assessment, while others also require a final assessment test.

Continuous assessment

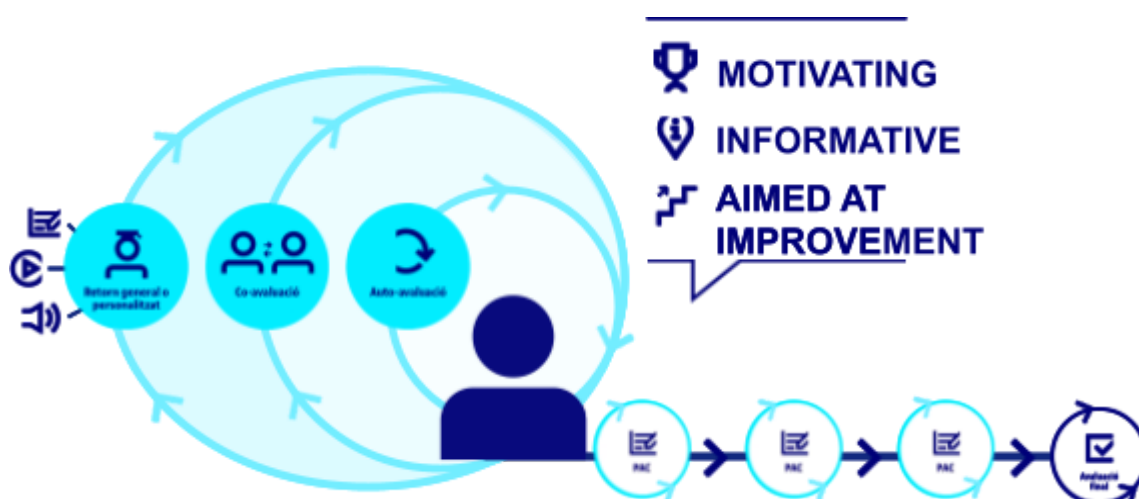
With continuous assessment, students are set continuous assessment activities that they must pass. To fulfil the requirement for properly doing the continuous assessment, students must complete and submit the number of continuous assessment activities specified in the course plan.

Continuous assessment is made up of the following **types of activities**:

Type of activity	Description
Continuous assessment activities	Continuous assessment activities must be submitted by students during the semester in accordance with a delivery schedule. Once teaching for the course has been completed, students are given a final continuous assessment grade based on the knowledge and competencies achieved and demonstrated. In some continuous assessment models, there can also be a final assessment test in addition to the continuous assessment.
Final projects	<p>Final project courses are taught based on doing and following various continuous assessment activities and culminate in the defence of the final project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of bachelor's degree final projects, this is an asynchronous defence carried out before an assessment committee, as specified in the course plan.² • In the case of master's degree final projects, the defence is carried out synchronously, online and in public before an assessment committee. <p>In both cases, the composition of the assessment committee must comply with the UOC academic regulations.</p>
Curricular or external internships	These are carried out through the Practicum and External Internship courses and seek to enable students to put into practice the competencies acquired in their academic studies. They can be carried out online or on-site, and with or without an internship agreement.

² We are working on adapting bachelor's degree final projects to the new legislation introduced by Royal Decree 822/2021.

Formative feedback³ is a key part of continuous assessment and of the UOC's educational model. Care is also taken to guarantee identification of each student and the authorship of the work submitted. This is key to ensuring reliability.



Characteristics of feedback at the UOC.

Formative feedback is not just about the information provided by teaching staff on the development of a student's competencies. It is also a dialogic process in which students must understand the feedback received in order to apply it and enhance their learning process.

³ For more information on the characteristics of feedback at the UOC, have a look at the guide [UOC feedback. Teachers' guide](#).

Final assessment

Courses with final assessment tests can have the following types of tests:

Type of test	Description
Synthesis tests (ST)	Synthesis tests seek to assess the extent to which students have achieved the objectives and learning outcomes of the course, and also to complete the assessment process. Students must pass the continuous assessment before they can take the synthesis test. Synthesis tests are taken online and can take no more than one hour.
Exams (EX)	The aim of exams is to assess the extent to which students have comprehensively achieved the objectives and learning outcomes of the course, regardless of whether they have carried out and passed the continuous assessment activities. Exams are taken online and can take no more than two hours.

The UOC applies several combinations or weighting systems⁴. In accordance with the principle of flexibility, teaching staff may set the weighting formula they deem most appropriate for each course. For example: CA; CA + ST; CA + ST or EX, CA or EX, etc.

⁴ The various weighting systems are currently under review.

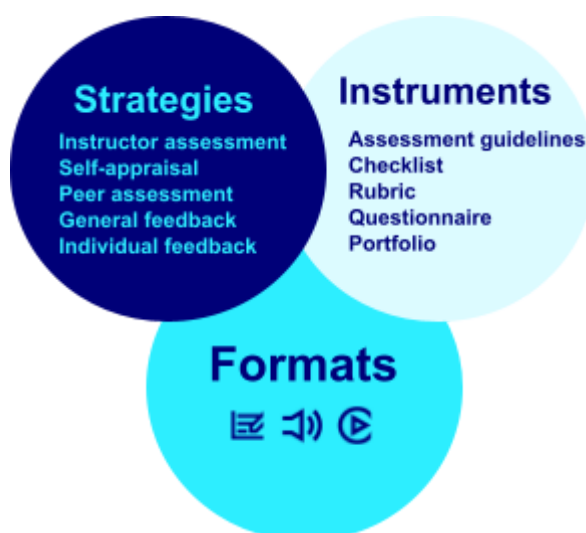
Digital assessment

The UOC is currently working on the gradual transformation of its assessment model. This transformation must ensure rigour and reliability in the validation of students' identities and the originality of their work.⁵ Both aspects are key to ensuring the continued quality of the UOC's educational model.

In order to carry out this transformation, the university has planned a number of actions to:

- **Review the continuous assessment process**, reinforcing it as a key element that reflects students' acquisition of competencies through the achievement of the various learning outcomes required for a degree.
- **Digitalize final tests** so that they can be taken in a fully digitalized environment with the same guarantees as those previously taken in person.

These actions harness the full potential of technology and combine various strategies, instruments and formats:



Strategies, instruments and formats associated with ICT-mediated assessment.

⁵ For more information, check out the document "[Authorship and identity verification strategies](#)" or the digital assessment section of the IntraUOC.

This combination has clear advantages regarding the assessment of teaching and learning processes for both students and teaching staff. These include (Guàrdia *et al.*, 2020):

- Enabling the implementation of a variety of strategies for continuing support and monitoring over time.
- Encouraging the management of different techniques and instruments to collect evidence of learning at both individual and group levels.
- Encouraging students to become actively involved, as well as potentially motivating them in their assessment process.
- Enabling the management of the information associated with the digital data generated during the teaching and learning process (such as statistics about students' online activity or data on their participation in a collaborative workspace).

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