



WHAT TO EXPECT AT UNIVERSITY: ASSESSMENT METHODS

ASSESSMENTS



The ways in which you are assessed at university will vary according to what type of degree you are studying. Nonetheless, we have produced a guide for you so you are absolutely certain of what each method of assessment you may come across entails. Assessment methods are usually published in prospectuses or on course webpages, so you are clear on what you need to do to succeed on your course.

WRITTEN EXAMS



These are usually taken at the end of the academic year in May/June or in January at the midway point of the year. They are particularly common in professional vocational subjects, such as law and accountancy. Some exams at university will be 'open-book' where you can take resources and notes in with you, whereas others will not allow this.

ESSAYS



These are extended pieces of writing, usually between 2,000-4,000 words in length. You will usually be given a title or a choice of titles to write about, although on some modules you will be able to come up with your own. Although they may seem like daunting prospects, essays can be broken up into subsections to make the task of writing them more digestible. You are usually given the titles well in advance of the deadline too.

PROJECT WORK



This is a series of activities that allows you to study, do research and present findings, often utilising your own abilities, interests, personal experience and aptitudes. You might be asked to work alone or in a group according to the project scope and difficulty.

GROUP WORK



Assessment at university is not just about how you work as an individual: often, on a range of different courses, it is also about how well you work in a team. Group work is designed to boost your skillset as well as your subject knowledge, and assesses the way in which your team organises itself and how well relationships are managed throughout the group.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT



A variety of courses will assess your practical skills. For example, in science subjects you will often be required to perform experiments under test conditions, and also in subjects such as theatre or film studies you will be assessed on how you perform a production. If you learn better through 'doing', check that the course you are interested in has a form of practical assessment.

PRESENTATIONS



This involves speaking in front of an audience, usually about a specific sub-topic or an area of research. You will be assessed according to how you deliver your content, as well as what your content actually consists of. Although this might be something of a daunting proposition, it can be a good way of expressing your enthusiasm for a subject, and allows you to be assessed according to how you speak as well as how you write.

REPORTS



Often, reports will be linked to practical work you do, on your own or with one or two other students. You will need to be prepared to stamp your own interpretation and analysis of the results of your practical work, not just a description. It is useful to start writing a report as soon as possible after completing the previous work.



PORTFOLIOS

For some courses, you might be asked to produce a portfolio, which is essentially a collection of creative pieces or plans which demonstrate how your knowledge and skills have accumulated over the duration of the course or module. As a result, the contents of a portfolio reflect your long-term learning.



OTHER

Other methods of assessment you may encounter include:

- spoken/oral exams
- computerised tests
- simulated scenarios
- role plays
- mooting
- entrepreneurial projects
- posters
- performance

Remember, every university is different and you may encounter just one or two of these assessments or several—it all depends on the course!