



PROFILE OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION

Focused Research Report No. 2 **2016**

Scholarship in Teaching
and Learning funded by
the National Forum:

*Strengthening Ireland's
evidence base for
teaching and learning
enhancement in higher
education*



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Profile of Assessment Practices in Irish Higher Education



Published by:

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
c/o 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

T: +353 1 6090648

Email admin@teachingandlearning.ie

Web: www.teachingandlearning.ie

December 2016

Preface

Teaching and learning enhancement is not possible without a strong evidence base. We need a clear picture of the kinds of practices that prevail and the kinds of experiences that are features of student learning across different fields of study. Reflecting on evidence that already exists and gathering evidence when it is absent are important parts of the activity that the National Forum leads. In all aspects of enhancement, in order to chart a course into the future, it is vital that we have a clear picture of where we are. Nowhere is this more important than it is when considering Ireland's higher education assessment practices.

I am delighted to introduce this report. It represents the outcome of a key National Forum research project and focuses on important issues and evidence relating to assessment in Irish higher education. This report is necessarily brief and its aim is to provide a precise and accurate picture of what's happening in assessment across the sector. But more importantly, it aims to inform and enable effective and critical conversations about how assessment is impacting and how it might impact on teaching and learning. Assessment OF, FOR and AS Learning is a complex and diverse theme and the evidence presented here cannot answer all our questions about ideal types and strategies. Rather, it raises useful, enhancement-orientated questions: How can we learn from the diversity of innovative practices that prevails across the sector? What is the role and function of exams and how do they compare to other forms of assessment? Is there scope to enhance our approaches to assessment with a view to making it more engaging, more imaginative, more authentic? The sector-wide consultations on this enhancement theme have indicated a strong commitment to engaging with these questions, and this report builds that capability even further.

I am hugely grateful to Eileen McEvoy, whose work on this project has given rise to such an excellent report, and to the whole National Forum team, led by Dr Terry Maguire, for their inputs and collaboration. Dr Geraldine O'Neill's expertise in the area of assessment also requires a special mention and has been a significant support to this work.

In addition, I thank Sean O'Reilly whose collaboration with the sector in implementing the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) has given rise to a growing and important evidence base of student perspectives on their engagement and learning experiences. Extracting assessment-related data from the ISSE database has added value to this report, and is just one example of how this data can support and shed light on our enhancement agenda.

Prof Sarah Moore

Chair, National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Table of Contents

Preface	iii
Key Findings	2
Introduction	3
Aims of this Report	3
Data Sources	4
Module Descriptors	4
Data from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement	4
Findings	5
Section One: Assessment OF Learning	6
Assessment Loads	6
<i>Integrative assessments</i>	7
Assessment Methods	8
<i>Examination as an assessment method</i>	9
<i>Comparing weighting of assessment methods across fields</i>	10
<i>Trends in weightings of assessment methods across programme stages</i>	12
<i>Completing assessments in groups</i>	14
Transparency of Assessment Practices	15
Section Two: Assessment FOR/AS Learning	17
Assessment FOR Learning	17
Assessment AS Learning	19
Section Three: Summary of Key Findings by Field of Study	22
Education	22
Arts & Humanities	23
Social Sciences, Journalism & Information	24
Business, Administration & Law	25
Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics	26
Information & Communications Technologies	27
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	28
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary	29
Health & Welfare	30
Services	31
Conclusions	32
References	35
Appendices	36

Key Findings

- The amount of information publically available about programme modules, and the assessment happening within them, differs within and across institutions. The level of transparency is somewhat dependent on whether institutions have online templates for gathering such information.
- There are no common patterns in programme design with regard to module size, i.e., programmes do not follow set patterns such as having all 5-credit modules or changing from 5-credit modules in first year to larger modules in final year. Patterns are mixed from programme to programme.
- Module sizes vary (within this profile, sizes varied from 3 ECTS to 55 ECTS credits). The most common module size is 5 ECTS credits.
- On average, students complete a much higher number of assessments per ECTS credit in single-semester modules than in full-year modules.
- The number of assessments per ECTS credit completed by students also differs between fields of study.
- Examination is the most common assessment method, although its popularity and weighting differs between fields, programmes and stages of programme.
- Other assessment methods also differ between fields; some fields focus mainly on a few assessment methods while others have a more balanced range of methods.
- Students in some fields are more likely than in others to receive feedback from lecturers/teaching staff. In some fields, the likelihood of receiving feedback is higher in first year than in final year.
- Students are more likely to ask questions, discuss course material and engage in behaviours which help them to assess their own learning at the end of their studies than at the beginning.

Introduction

*'If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system,
we must first look to its assessment procedures.'*

(Rowntree, 1987, p. 1)

Assessment is at the heart of teaching and learning. Assessment methods, content and strategies reflect many of the key features and values of a programme, and have a fundamental influence on student learning experiences. While there are pockets of insights from subject areas (e.g., CEEN, 2016; Scott, 2011), an overall picture of assessment practices across the Irish higher education sector has not yet been captured. The National Forum Enhancement Theme 2016-18 focuses on Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning. To inform the enhancement theme, advisors and experts from around the country have come together to discuss the definition and principles of assessment within the Irish context, to explore how authentic assessment might best be achieved and to consider how to promote effective programmatic assessment practices within and across institutions and fields of study. In addition to building capacity through conversations, the enhancement theme aims to build evidence on assessment practices from across the sector.

Aims of this Report

This report aims to inform the current enhancement theme of the National Forum by profiling documented assessment practices across a sample of 30 undergraduate degree programmes. Further, the study aims to explore whether and how assessment practices differ between fields of study and to share insights regarding students' experiences of assessment across Irish higher education.

Data Sources

Two sources of data were drawn upon for this study:

Module Descriptors

Assessment information was extracted from the module descriptors of 30 randomly-selected undergraduate degree programmes across the Irish higher education sector. In each programme, modules in the first semester, final semester and one mid-programme semester were profiled. The 30 selected programmes included three from each of the ten International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)¹ fields of study. This allowed for comparison of practices across fields. Additionally, an effort was made to ensure that the selection included programmes from each university and institute of technology, as well as a number of colleges of education and HECA colleges. Table 1 gives an overview of the numbers involved in the profile.

Table 1 Overview of profile

Number of degree programmes profiled	30
Three-year degrees	12
Four-year degrees	17
Five-year degrees	1
Level 7 programmes	8
Level 8 programmes	22
Based in institutes of technology	16
Based in universities	10
Based in colleges of education	2
Based in HECA colleges	2
Number of fields of study profiled	10
Number of modules profiled	487
Number of individual assessments profiled	1260 ²

Full detail on ISCED fields, the selection of programmes, the collection of module descriptors, the data extracted and the calculations conducted is available in Appendix A.

Data from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement³ (ISSE) is an annual survey which explores students' experiences of higher education. First piloted in 2013, ISSE is designed to inform developments within institutions while also providing a national set of data. For the purposes of this report, first year and final year response data from the 2016 ISSE was accessed. In all, 14,076 first year undergraduates and 10,650 final year undergraduates responded to the 2016 survey. Data included in this report relates to ISSE questions specific to students' experiences of assessment.

1 UNESCO developed the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. - See more at: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx#sthash.mogQ3H6a.dpuf>

2 This is a minimum figure. See Appendix A for details.

3 Studentsurvey.ie

Findings

The findings are presented in three sections:

- The first section focuses on Assessment OF Learning practices, i.e., practices related to assessments completed to demonstrate learning. This section relies on data gathered from module descriptors across the selected programmes. It also includes some data from ISSE 2016, where appropriate. The section begins with some contextual information regarding assessment loads. This is followed by an examination of the assessment methods employed and their relative weighting across fields of study and stages of programme. The section concludes with an overview of the transparency of assessment practices, as encountered when gathering data from module descriptors.
- The second section provides some insight into Assessment FOR Learning practices, i.e., where assessment is used to give feedback on teaching and student learning, and Assessment AS Learning practices, i.e., where assessment is used to empower and engage students to become better learners. This section relies on data from related questions from ISSE 2016.
- The final section summarises the key findings from the profile for each field of study.

Section One: Assessment OF Learning

Assessment Loads

Within the 487 sampled undergraduate modules in this profile, almost one third were full-year modules. The breakdown of module duration and number across the 30 profiled programmes can be seen in Appendix B. Some programmes were made up entirely of full-year modules, others entirely of single-semester modules, while others involved a mix of module durations. In all, 1260 individual assessments⁴ were identified across the sampled modules. Two thirds of modules across the 30 programmes were 5-ECTS credit modules, while others ranged from 3 ECTS credits to 55 ECTS credits. A breakdown of the average number of assessments for full-year and single-semester modules can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Average number of assessments by module duration

Module duration	Average assessments per module	Average assessments per 10 ECTS
Single-semester (n = 343)	2.6	4.5
Full-year (n = 144)	2.5	2.6

The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS in single-semester modules was found to be much higher than the average number in full-year modules. The most common module types were single-semester 5-ECTS modules (n = 270) and full-year 10-ECTS credit modules (n = 78). The average number of assessments in a single-semester 5-ECTS module was 2.6; the average number of assessments in a full-year 10-ECTS module was 2.8.

Figure 1 illustrates the average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits across fields of study⁵. Within the sampled programmes, students in Services, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Veterinary, ICTs and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction complete a higher number of separate assessments per ECTS credit than students in other fields.

4 This is a minimum figure. See Appendix A for details.

5 For an explanation of the calculation of the number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits see Appendix A.

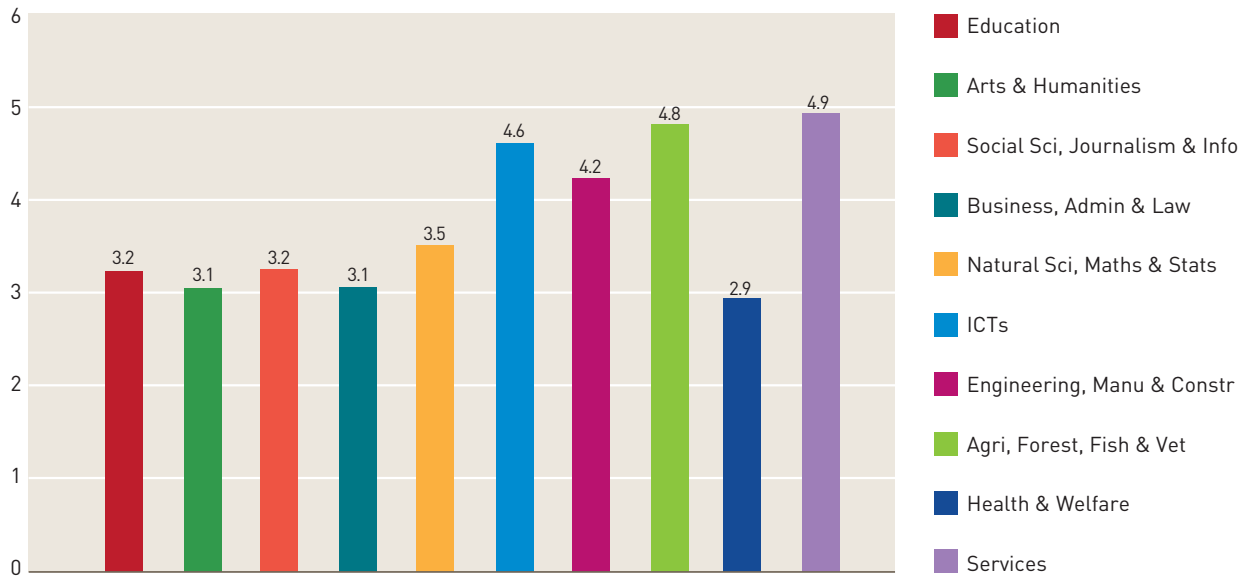


Figure 1 Average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits by field of study

Integrative assessments

The modular system has been criticised for compartmentalising assessment, resulting in recent moves to develop more integrative assessments. One favourable aspect of integrative assessment is the opportunity it presents for students to combine ideas from different subjects, allowing for deeper learning. The responses to an ISSE question which determined the degree to which students combined ideas from different subjects/modules when completing assignments is presented in Figure 2. Across all fields of study, final year students are more likely than first year students to combine ideas between subjects/modules. While it is not possible to conclude the extent to which integrative assessment across modules is taking place, many students are combining ideas from different subjects, which is an important foundation for integrative assessment to occur.

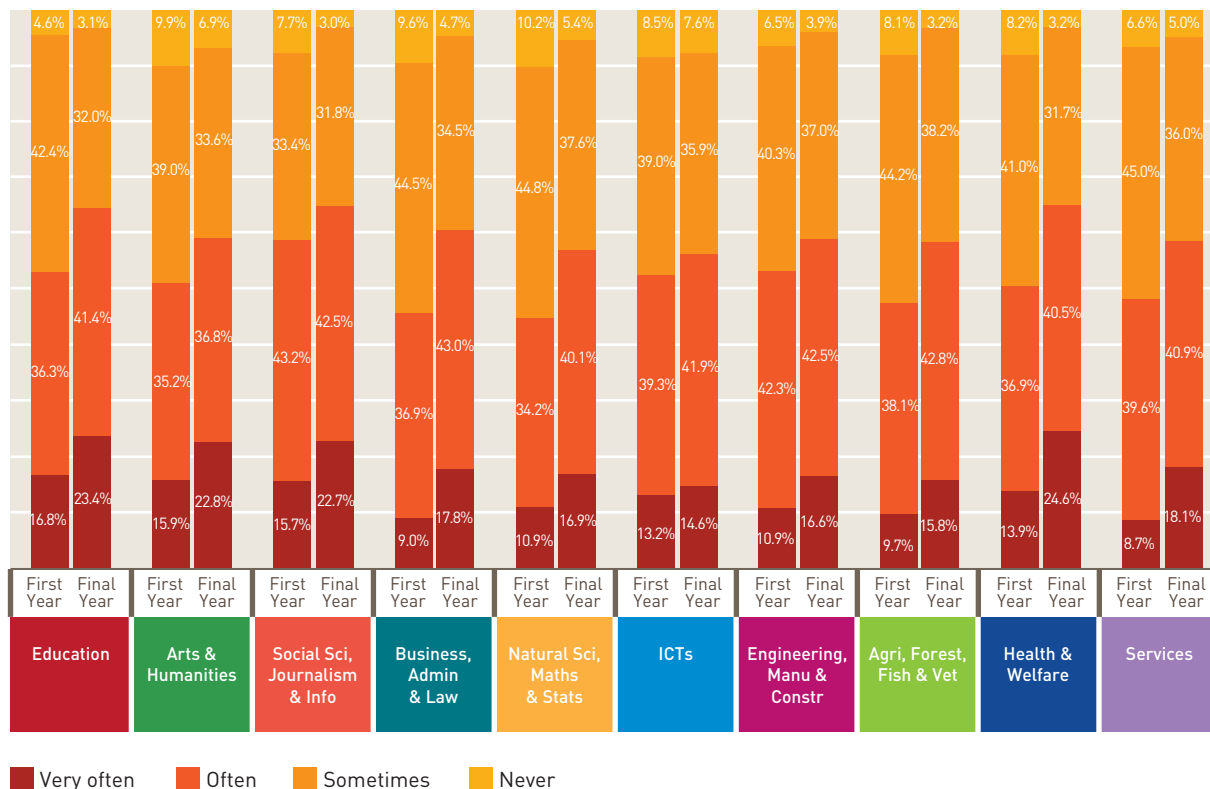


Figure 2 During the current academic year, about how often have you combined ideas from different subjects/modules when completing assignments? (ISSE, 2016)

Assessment Methods

In this sub-section, the methods used across the 30 sampled undergraduate programmes will be outlined. A number of assessment methods were identified in the profiled module descriptors. Although there were variations in the exact wording of each method within and across programmes, it was possible to allocate each assessment to one of 16 broad method categories as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Assessment method categories

Assessment method category	Examples of wording of assessment in module descriptors
Attendance/participation	'participation element', 'attendance at tutorials'
Case study/note	'legal case study', 'case note'
Essay	'written essay', 'essay assignment', 'essay'
Examination	'exam', 'formal exam', 'end of year examination'
In-class test/short answer/quiz	'class test', 'online quiz', 'in-class exam'
Interview/Oral exam	'oral exam', 'interview', 'oral continuous assessment'
Journal/Reflections	'reflection', 'visual diary', 'reflective learning journal'
Lab work/book	'lab report', 'lab workbook', 'laboratory portfolio'
MCQ	'multiple choice test', 'online MCQ', 'MCQ'
Other assessment/assignment	'resource pack', 'image analysis', 'create a blog'
Portfolio	'portfolio', 'placement portfolio',
Practical	'tutorial work', 'practical assignment', 'practical assessment'
Presentation	'group presentation', 'poster presentation', 'presentation'
Project/Dissertation	'FYP submission', 'group project', 'individual project'
Report	'written report', 'report'
Unspecified assessment/assignment	'continuous assessment', 'coursework', 'assignment'
Work practice	'teaching practice', 'placement-based assignment'

Examination as an assessment method

Overall, 296 of the 487 sampled modules (61%) used one or more formal examinations as a method of assessment (See Table 4). In the fields of Business, Administration & Law, Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics and Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary at least 75% of the sampled modules contained examinations. This compares to just one third of modules in the field of Education. When exploring the weighting of examinations within a module, the fields with the highest average weighting for examinations within such modules were Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics, Services and Business, Administration & Law. The lowest were found in Education, Arts & Humanities and Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary.

Table 4 Proportion of modules containing examinations, with average weighting

	Total number of modules...	...of which contain one or more exams	Proportion of modules containing exams	Average weighting of exams within these modules
Education	55	19	35%	59%
Arts & Humanities	48	29	60%	59%
Social Sciences, Journalism & Information	51	32	63%	63%
Business, Administration & Law	46	38	83%	67%
Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics	48	36	75%	81%
ICTs	51	27	53%	58%
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	57	38	67%	65%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary	46	34	74%	59%
Health & Welfare	37	16	43%	63%
Services	48	27	56%	68%

The number of examinations in each field in the context of the overall number of assessments within the field can be seen in Table 5. These figures show that there is a high number of non-examination assessments across fields, indicating a diversity of methods.

Table 5 Number of assessments and examinations per field

	Total number of assessments	Number of examinations	Number of non-examination assessments
Education	115	20	95
Arts & Humanities	118	29	89
Social Sciences, Journalism & Information	120	32	88
Business, Administration & Law	127	45	82
Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics	121	36	85
ICTs	138	27	111
Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	146	38	108
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary	154	40	114
Health & Welfare	88	19	69
Services	133	27	106
Total	1260	313	947

Comparing weighting of assessment methods across fields

Each individual assessment had an associated percentage weighting within its given module. In order to compare the weighting of different assessment methods within and across fields, it was necessary to first adjust for credit load and module duration. The formula used to calculate the relative weighting of each assessment can be found in Appendix A.

Using this approach, the assessment method with the highest relative weighting overall (across the 30 selected programmes) was examination, at 38%. The next highest relative weighting was associated with project/dissertation at 12%, followed by practical at 7% and essay at 6%.

A closer look at the four assessments methods in each field of study with the highest relative weighting highlights that different assessment methods have different relative weightings across fields of study (Figure 3)⁶. Essays had a higher relative weighting in Education, Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences, Journalism & Information. On the other hand, while 'practical' is not one of the top four methods in these fields it is one of the top four in six of the remaining fields of study. Consistent with the findings in the previous subsection, Business, Administration & Law and Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics had the highest relative weighting for examination, while Education had the lowest, followed by Health & Welfare.

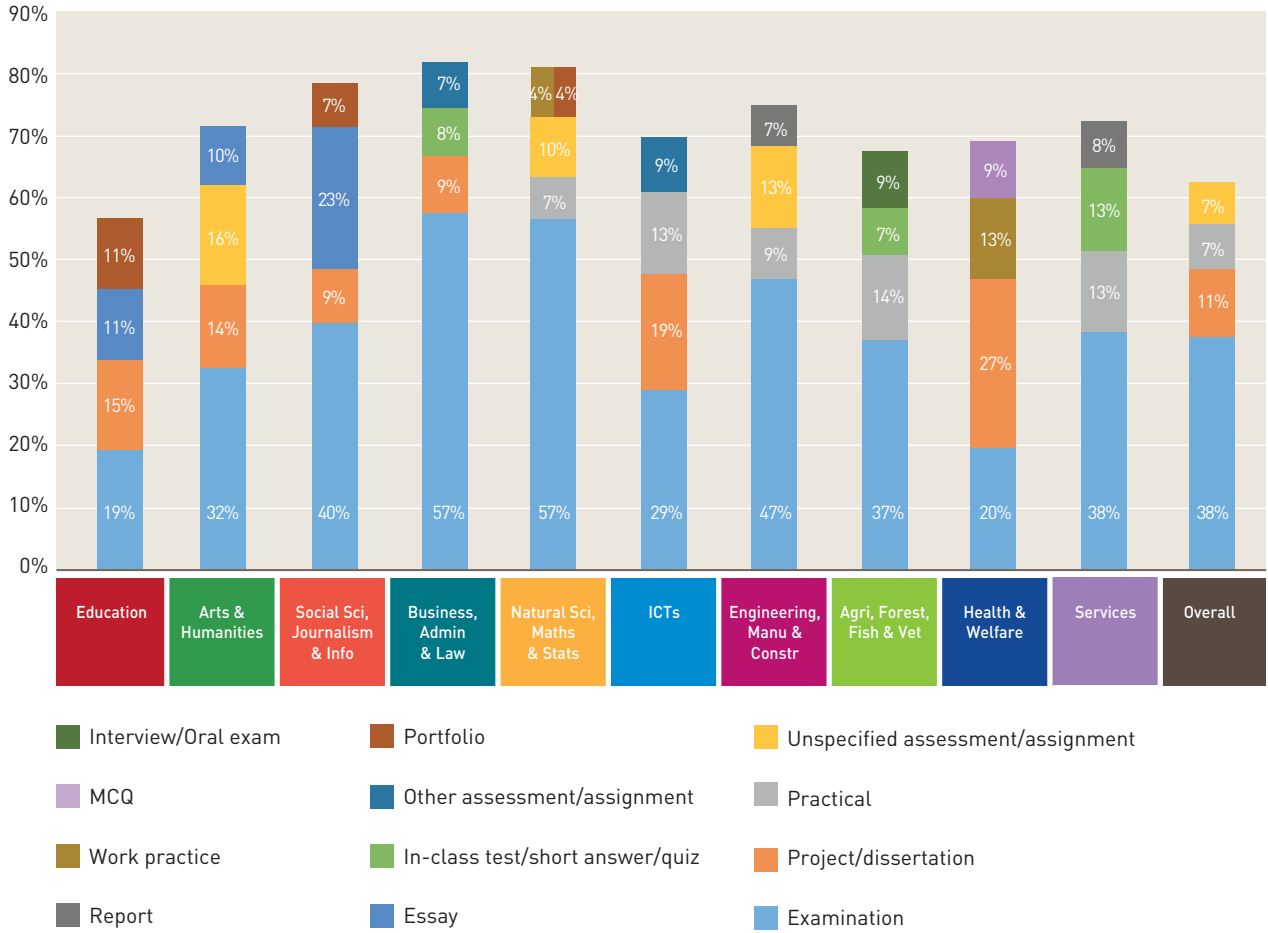
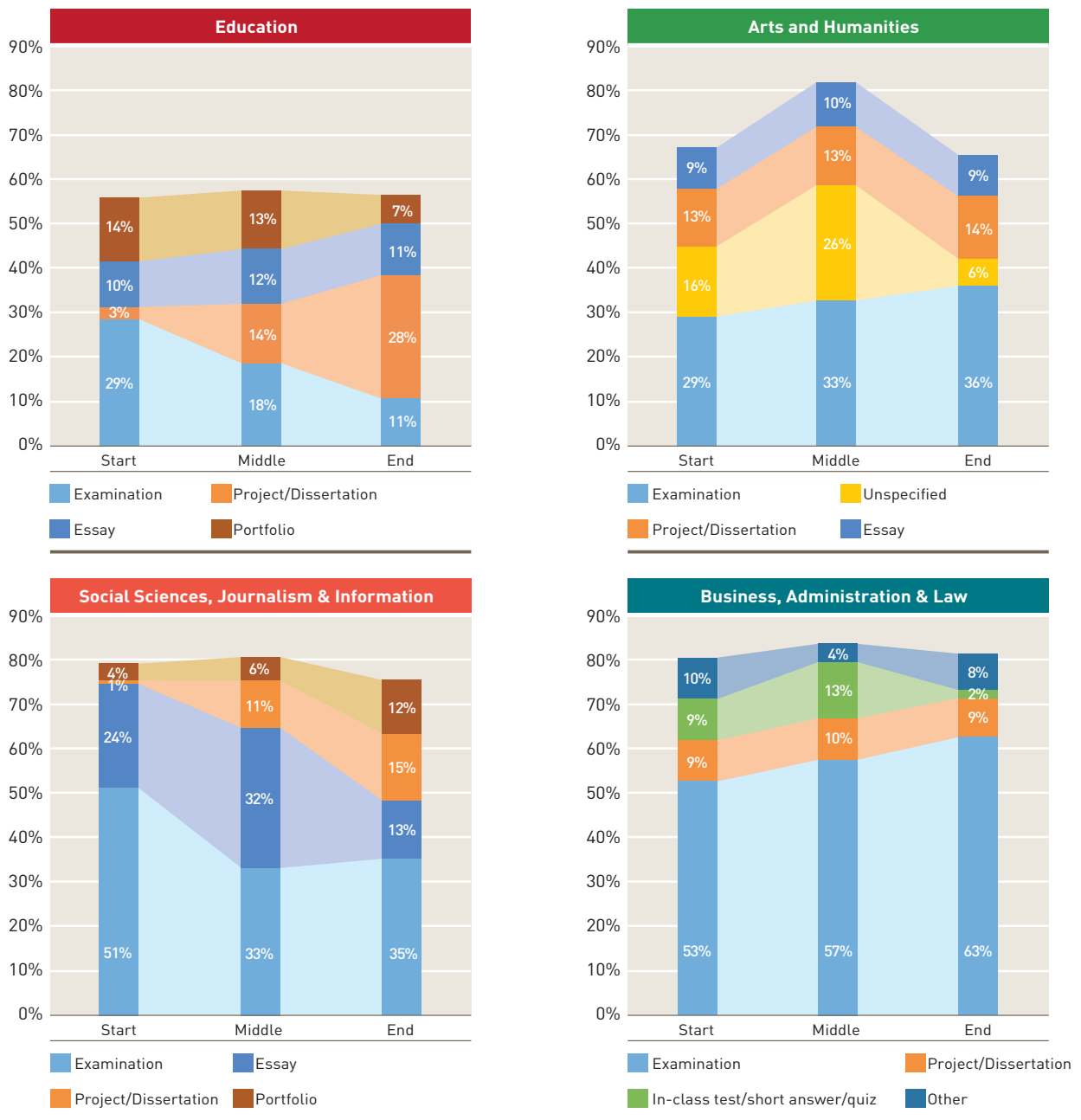


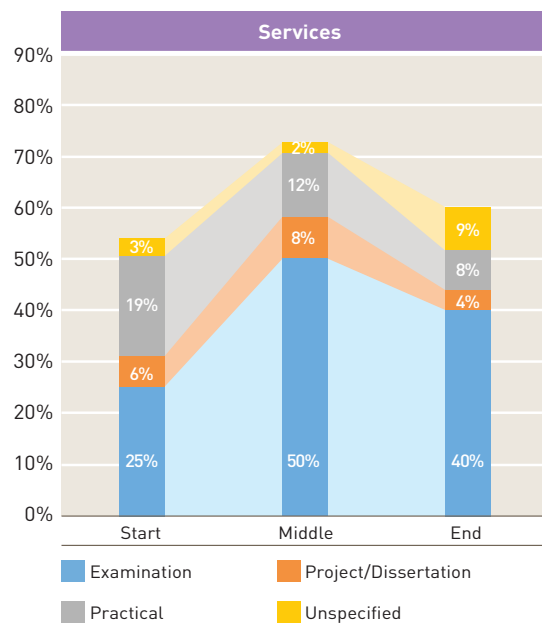
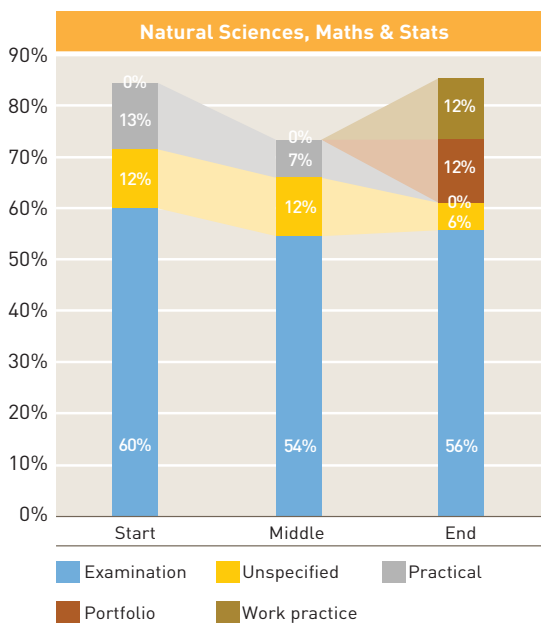
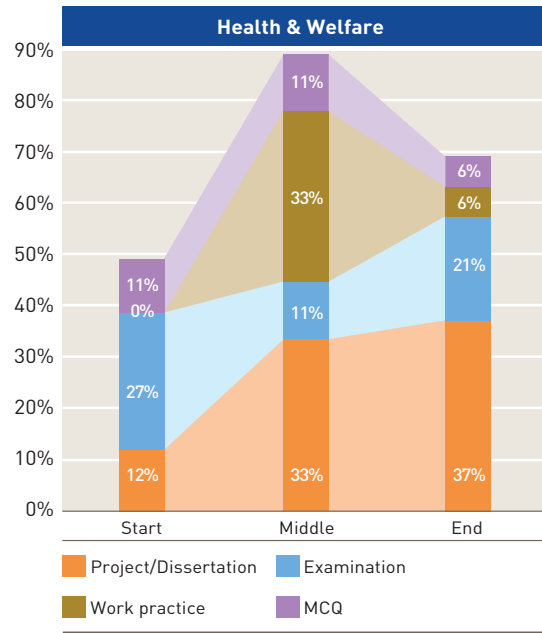
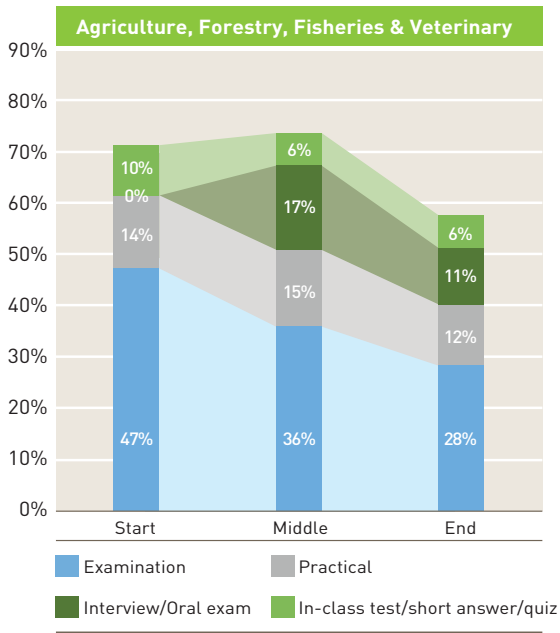
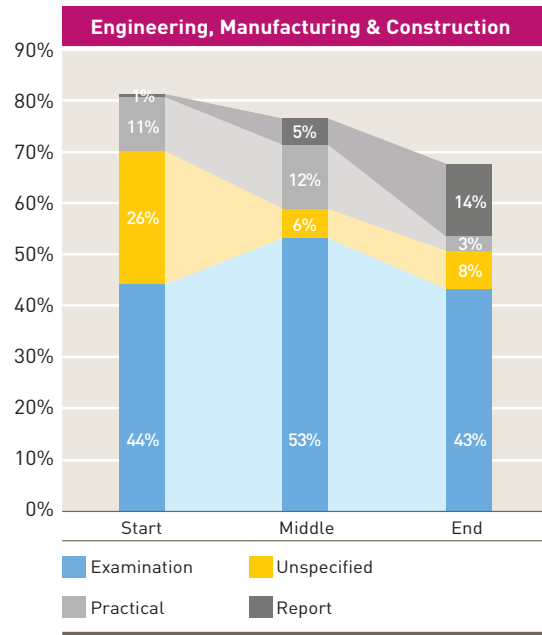
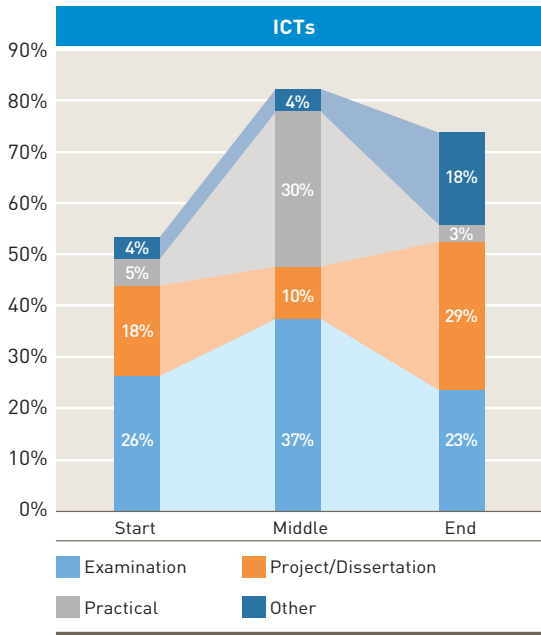
Figure 3 Relative weighting of top four assessment methods in each field of study

Trends in weightings of assessment methods across programme stages

The trends in the top four assessment methods across programme stages in the ten fields of study are illustrated in Figure 4⁷. The weighting of different assessment methods varies across fields of study among the sampled programmes. For some fields, the relative weighting of examinations increases as students progress through a programme, for others the weighting decreases, while some fields of study reveal a high or low in the selected mid-programme semester. Similarly, the weighting of other methods increase or decrease as programmes progress.

Figure 4 Trends in relative weighting of the top four assessment methods by field of study across programme stage





While Figures 3 and 4 identify the methods of assessment with the highest relative weighting, the category 'other assessment/assignment' included a variety of innovative assessments that could not be easily categorised. These included assessments such as writing a conference abstract, conducting a video analysis of teaching, completing a competency assessment workbook, creating a webpage and creating resources such as a patient information booklet. The detail of assessments within existing categories, such as 'project' and 'portfolio', also showed that while traditional methods are being used, they are sometimes used in non-traditional ways.

Completing assessments in groups

Within the module descriptors, many assessment methods were described as taking place in groups, such as 'group projects' and 'group presentations'. Although it was not possible to get an accurate picture of the proportion of group work from the module descriptors, the ISSE data presented in Figure 5 gives a sense of how often students work together on projects or assignments across fields of study. Overall, the level of group work is quite high and is more common in final year than in first year. This is particularly true in the fields of Education, Business, Administration & Law and Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary.

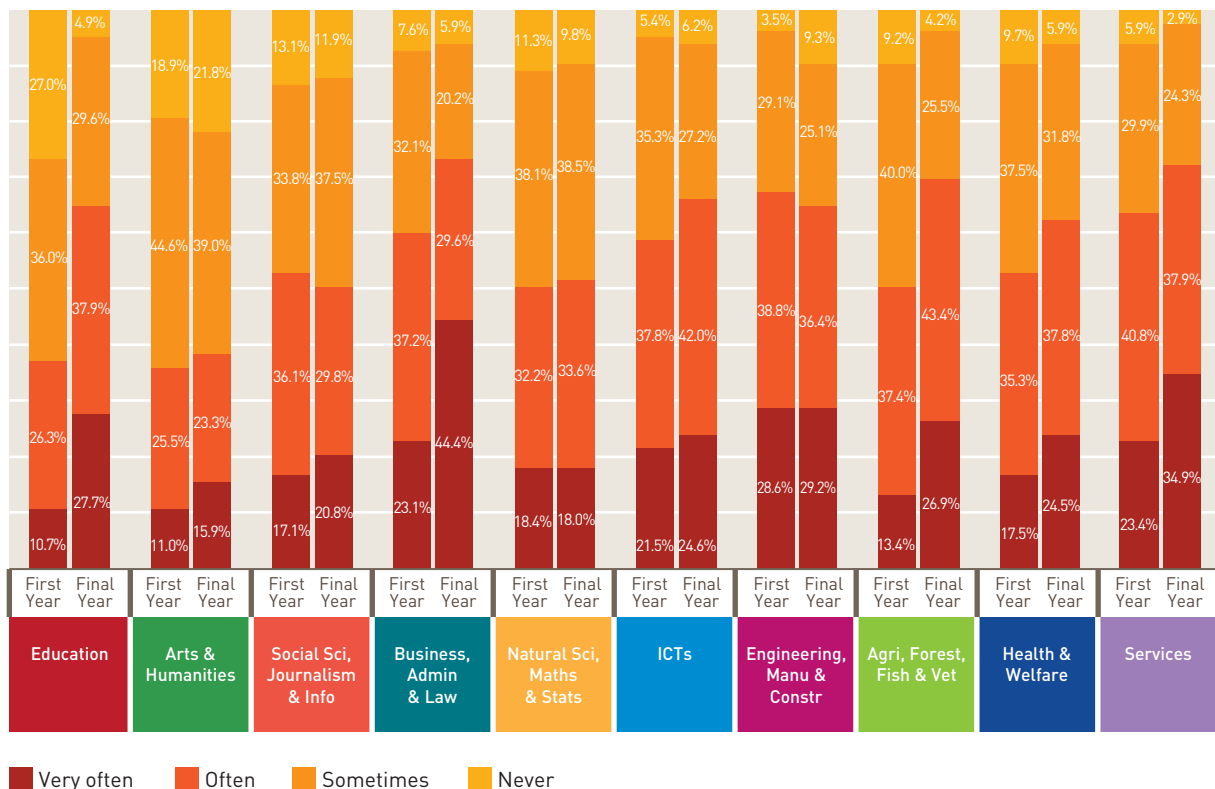


Figure 5 During the current academic year, about how often have you worked with other students on projects or assignments? (ISSE, 2016)

Transparency of Assessment Practices

Of the 30 selected undergraduate programmes in this study, 14 had module descriptors on their institutional websites, including detailed assessment information. Of the remaining programmes, 12 listed only the titles of modules within the programme, while four provided online module descriptors with only partial assessment information, such as the percentage breakdown between examinations and continuous assessment, without any description of what such continuous assessment involved.

When module descriptors were obtained from all programmes, either online or directly from the institution, a total of 116 individual assessments (9%) were found to not give any detail of the assessment method being used and were categorised as 'unspecified'. Each field of study had some unspecified assessments. Additionally, 40% of assessments were not accompanied by any information regarding the timing of the assessment.

There are a few points to note regarding this apparent lack of transparency within some programmes. Firstly, the level of transparency was not particular to a field of study or institution type. Instead, whether an institution had a template to assist staff in the compilation of online module descriptors, and how such a template was constructed, was a strong predictor of the level of information that could be accessed online regarding a programme. The language used within such templates was also relevant. It was often the case, for example, that assessments were broadly categorised as either 'exam' or 'continuous assessment'. The term 'continuous assessment' only gives an indication of the timing of an assessment, rather than giving an indication of the assessment method.

Despite a relative lack of transparency evident in assessment practices as documented in module descriptors, the 2016 ISSE data suggests that students within programmes perceive lecturers/teaching staff as having clearly explained course goals and requirements (Figure 6). Overall, first year students perceive slightly more clarity than final year students and there is little difference evident between fields of study. Those perceiving the lowest level of clarity were final year students in the field of Education and final year students in the field of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary.

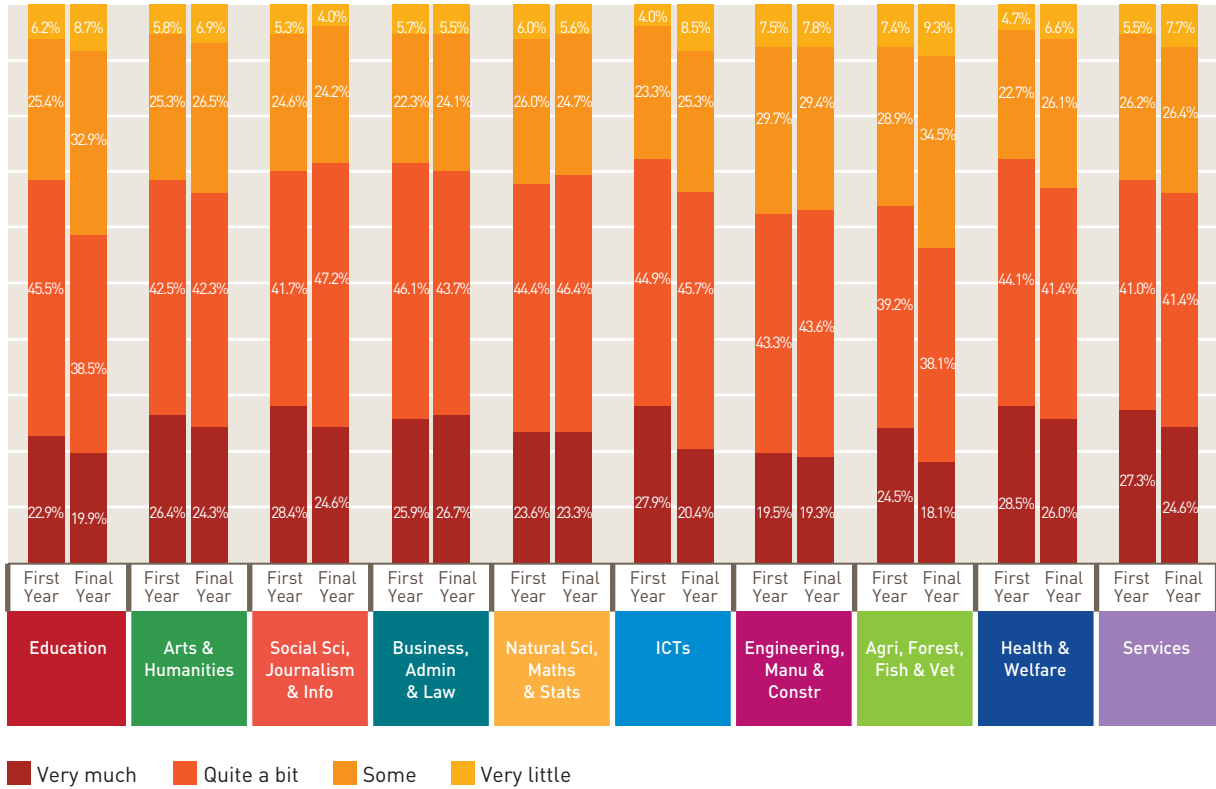


Figure 6 During the current year, to what extent have lecturers/teaching staff clearly explained course goals and requirements? (ISSE, 2016)

Section Two: Assessment FOR/AS Learning

While the profile built from module descriptors has primarily focused on building a picture of Assessment OF Learning practices documented across selected programmes of study in Irish higher education, the 2016 ISSE data sheds light on students' experiences of Assessment FOR and AS Learning practices. Assessment FOR Learning has been defined as using assessment to give feedback on teaching and student learning, while Assessment AS Learning represents student empowerment and engagement to become a better learner, and in particular how students self-monitor their learning.

Assessment FOR Learning

A number of questions in the 2016 ISSE related to students' interactions with staff regarding their assessments. These included questions related to receiving feedback and discussing performance with academic staff. Figure 7 indicates that there is a relatively low level of interaction between students and staff focused on student performance generally. Between programme stages, first year students are less likely than final year students to discuss their performance with academic staff, with final year Arts & Humanities and final year Services students being the most likely to experience such discussions often/very often.

Figures 8 and 9 suggest that interactions with staff involving feedback on assessments happen more often than general discussions on performance. The likelihood of a student receiving feedback on a draft/work in progress also varies between field of study and stage in programme (Figure 8). Final year Education students are least likely to receive such feedback often/very often. In contrast, first and final year Services students and Arts & Humanities students and first year ICTs student are more likely to receive such feedback. The frequency of prompt feedback is also higher in first year, compared to final year, across all fields of study, and is lowest amongst students in the final year of Education and of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary (Figure 9).

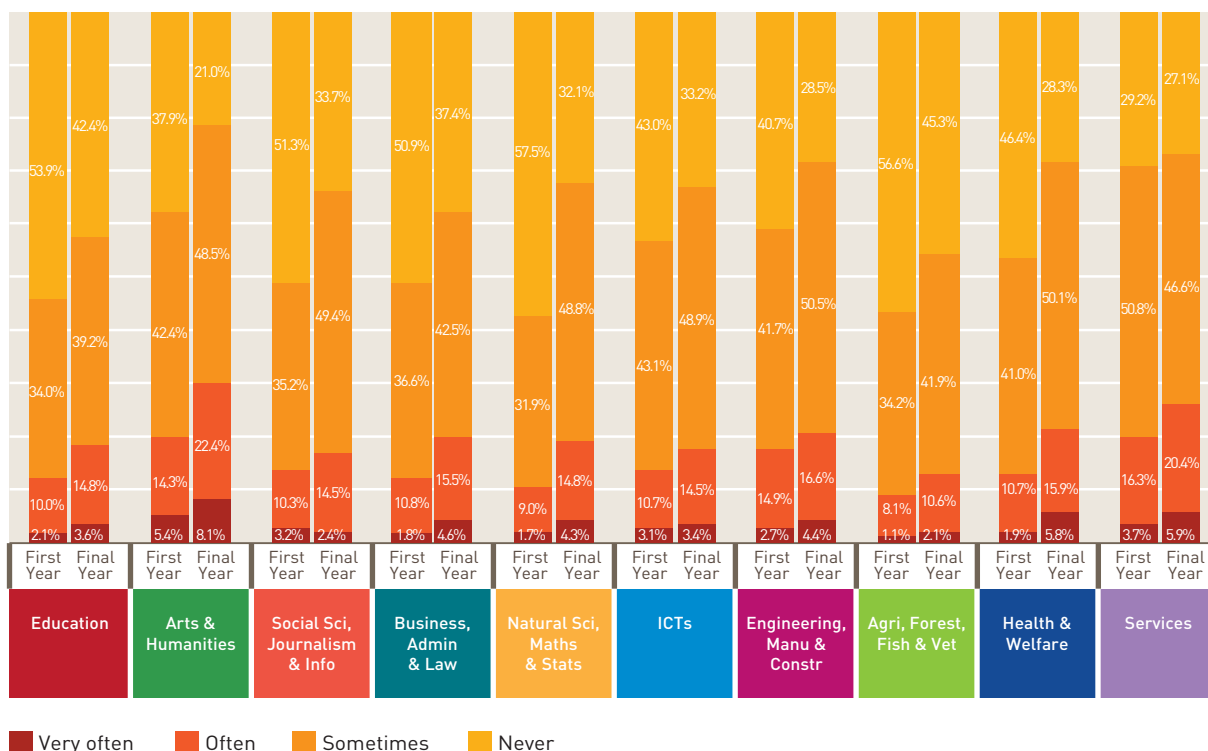


Figure 7 During the current academic year, about how often have you discussed your performance with academic staff? (ISSE, 2016)

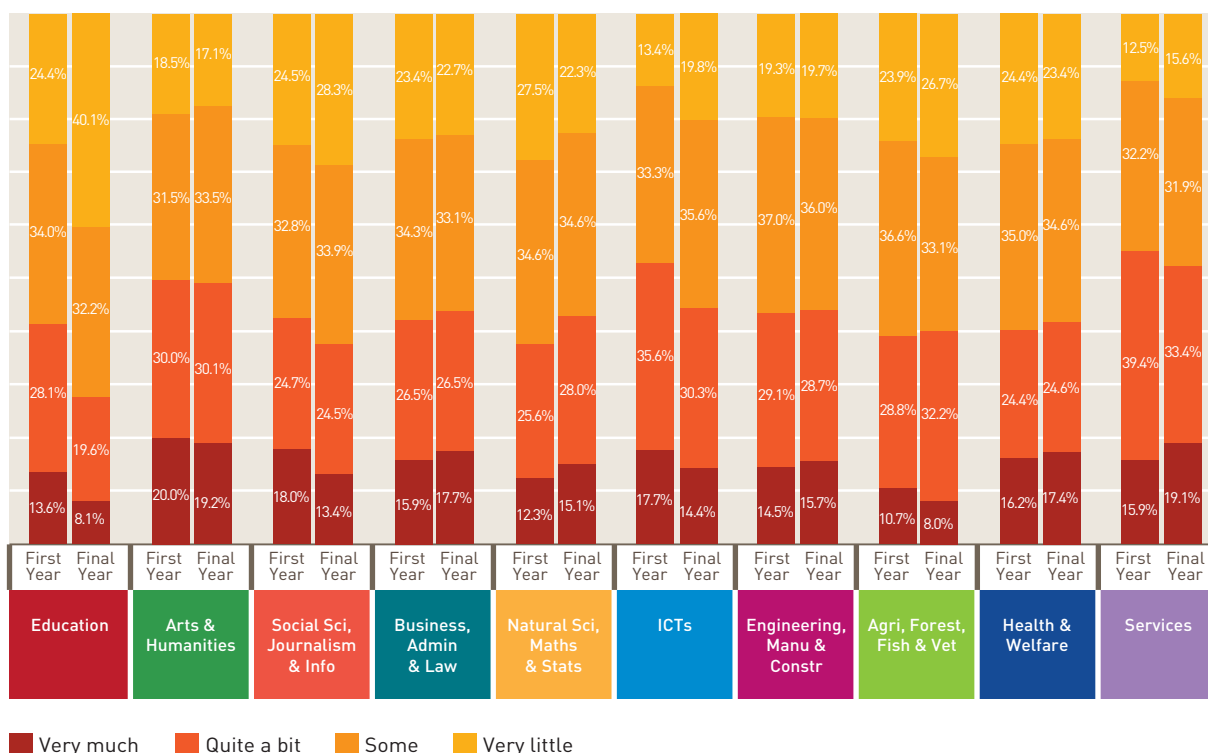


Figure 8 During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress? (ISSE, 2016)

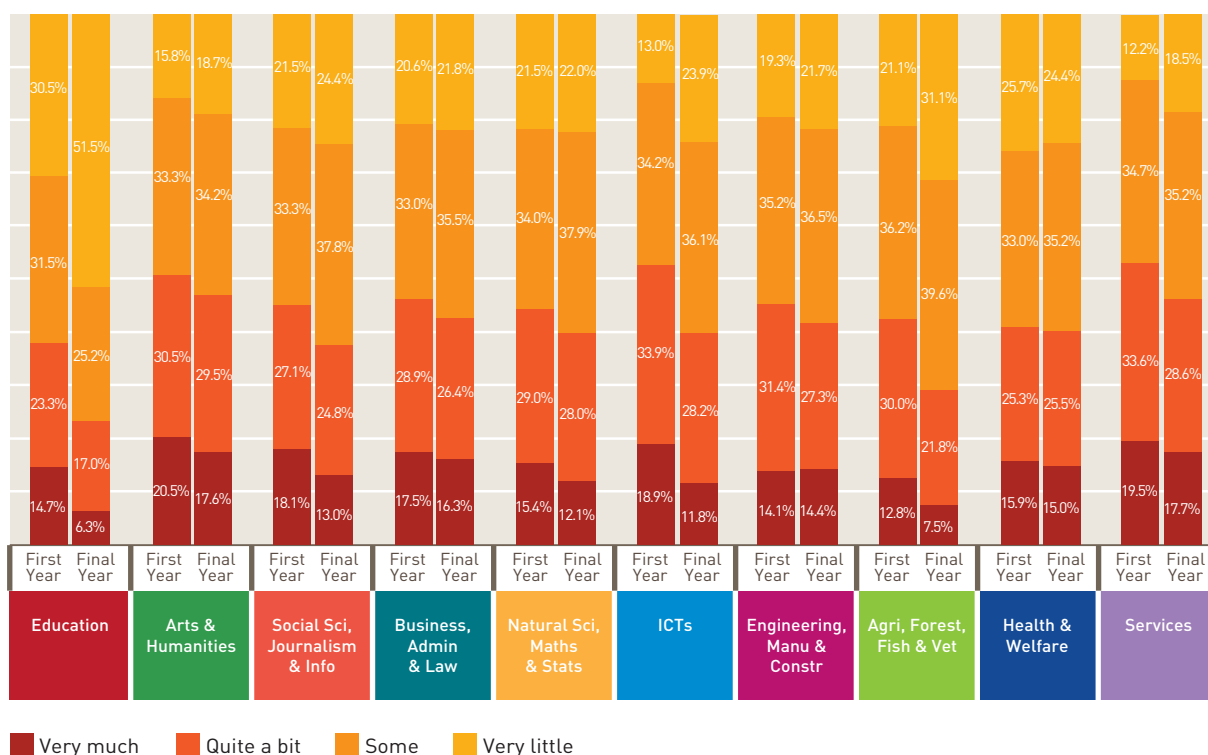


Figure 9 During the current academic year, to what extent have lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments? (ISSE, 2016)

Assessment AS Learning

Assessment AS Learning involves students gaining a deeper understanding of their own thought processes; it is an active process which prompts students to interact with new ideas and create their own understandings (Earl & Katz, 2006). This form of assessment results in students self-monitoring their learning and judging how best to improve. A number of questions in ISSE 2016 provided an overview of the extent to which students in Irish higher education see themselves as engaging with this form of assessment. Overall, 77% of first year students and 74% of final year students stated that they worked on assessments that informed them how well they were learning during the current academic year (ISSE, 2016).

Figure 10 shows that the majority of students are active in their own learning (by asking questions or contributing to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online). Students can often monitor their learning in an area or they can develop their understanding of a topic by discussing it with peers or explaining concepts to others. Figures 11 and 12 indicate that final year Education students are most likely to explain course material to other students or discuss course material with others in preparation for examinations. Across the fields of study, final year students are more likely than first year students to find themselves explaining/discussing course material.

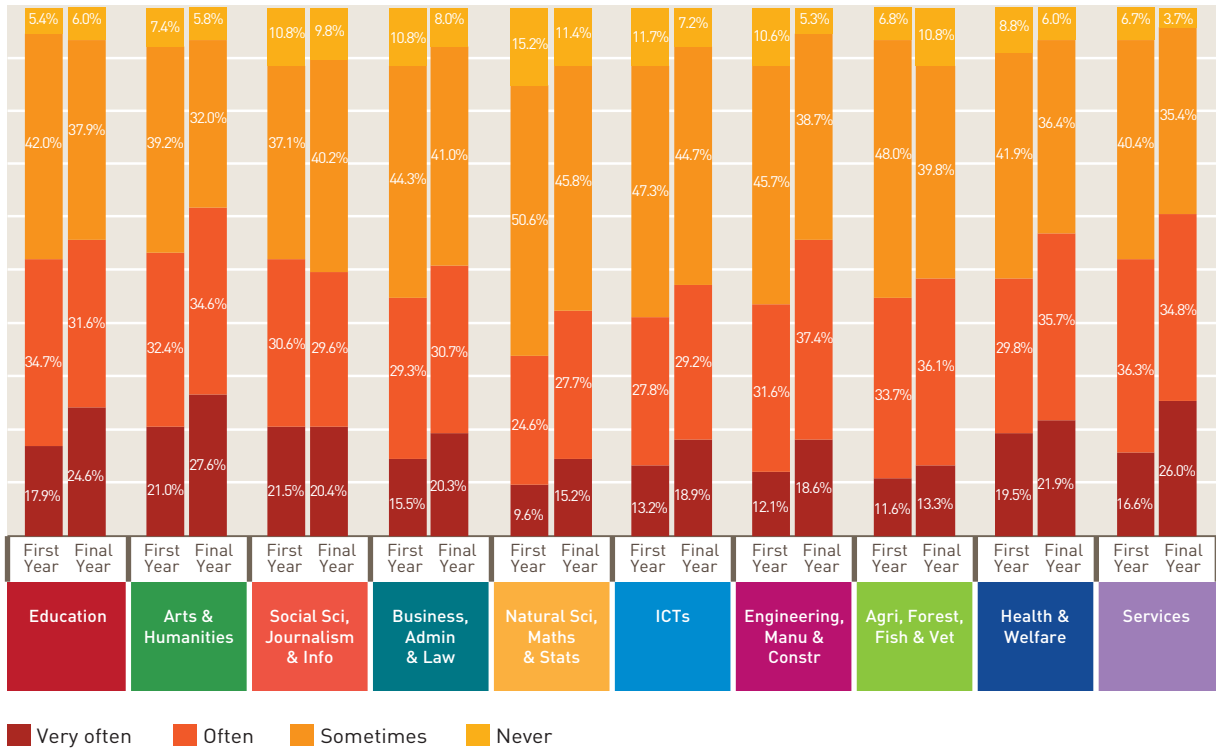


Figure 10 During the current academic year, about how often have you asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online? (ISSE, 2016)

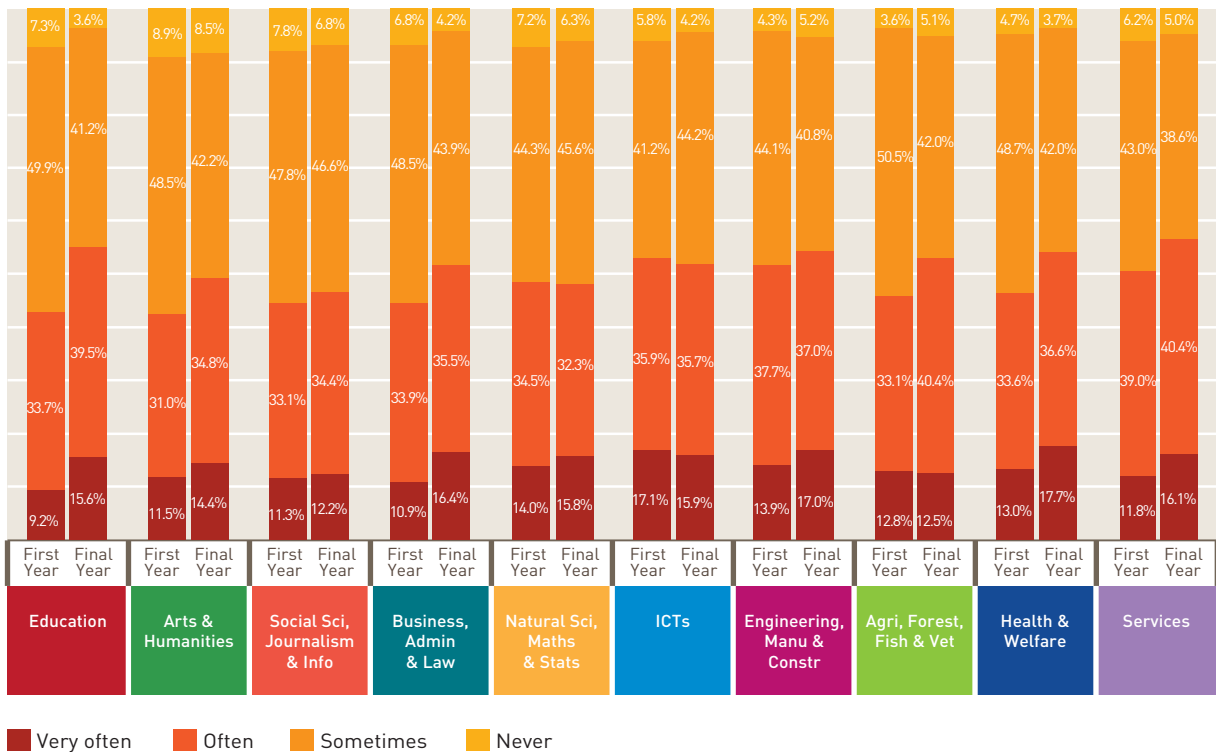


Figure 11 During the current academic year, about how often have you explained course material to one or more students? (ISSE, 2016)

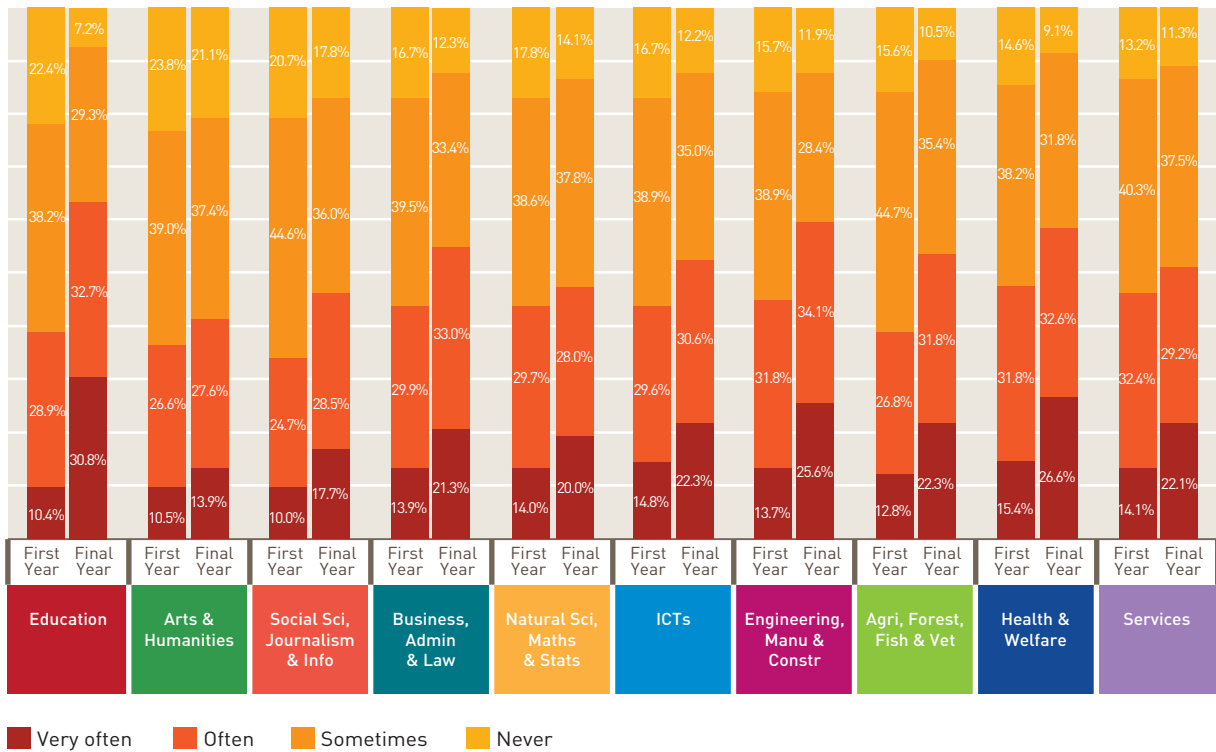


Figure 12 During the current academic year, about how often have you prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students? (ISSE, 2016)

Section Three: Summary of Key Findings by Field of Study

Education

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 3.2.
- 35% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 59%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (19%), followed by Project/Dissertation (15%), Portfolio (11%) and Essay (11%).
- The relative weighting of examinations decreased across programme stages from 29% in first year to 11% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE⁸:

- 53% of first years and 65% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 37% of first years and 66% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 68% of first years and 58% of final year students.
- 12% of first years and 18% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 42% of first years and 28% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 38% of first years and 23% of final year students.
- 53% of first years and 56% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 43% of first years and 55% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 39% of first years and 63% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

8 All ISSE findings refer to the academic year 2015/16.

Arts & Humanities

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 3.1.
- 60% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 59%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (32%), followed by Unspecified assessment (16%), Project/Dissertation (14%) and Essay (10%).
- The relative weighting of examinations increased across programme stages from 29% in first year to 36% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 51% of first years and 60% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 36% of first years and 39% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 69% of first years and 67% of final year students.
- 20% of first years and 30% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 50% of first years and 49% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 51% of first years and 47% of final year students.
- 53% of first years and 62% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 43% of first years and 49% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 37% of first years and 41% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Social Sciences, Journalism & Information

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 3.2.
- 63% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 63%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (40%), followed by Essay (23%), Project/Dissertation (9%) and Portfolio (7%).
- The relative weighting of examinations changed across programme stages from 51% in first year to 33% in mid-programme to 35% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 59% of first years and 65% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 53% of first years and 51% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 70% of first years and 72% of final year students.
- 13% of first years and 17% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 43% of first years and 38% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 45% of first years and 38% of final year students.
- 52% of first years and 50% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 44% of first years and 47% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 35% of first years and 46% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Business, Administration & Law

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 3.1.
- 83% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 67%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (57%), followed by Project/Dissertation (9%), In-class test/short answer/quiz (8%) and Other assessment (7%).
- The relative weighting of examinations increased across programme stages from 53% in first year to 63% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 46% of first years and 61% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 60% of first years and 74% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 72% of first years and 70% of final year students.
- 13% of first years and 20% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 42% of first years and 44% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 46% of first years and 43% of final year students.
- 45% of first years and 51% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 45% of first years and 52% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 44% of first years and 54% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 3.5.
- 75% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 81%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (57%), followed by Unspecified assessment (10%), Practical (7%) and Portfolio/Work practice (4%).
- The relative weighting of examinations changed across programme stages from 60% in first year to 54% in mid-programme to 56% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 45% of first years and 57% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 51% of first years and 52% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 68% of first years and 70% of final year students.
- 11% of first years and 19% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 38% of first years and 43% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 44% of first years and 40% of final year students.
- 34% of first years and 43% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 49% of first years and 48% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 44% of first years and 48% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Information & Communication Technologies

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 4.6.
- 53% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 58%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (29%), followed by Project/Dissertation (19%), Practical (13%) and Other assessment (9%).
- The relative weighting of examinations changed across programme stages from 26% in first year to 37% in mid-programme to 23% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 53% of first years and 57% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 59% of first years and 67% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 73% of first years and 66% of final year students.
- 14% of first years and 18% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 53% of first years and 45% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 53% of first years and 40% of final year students.
- 41% of first years and 48% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 53% of first years and 52% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 44% of first years and 53% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 4.2.
- 67% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 65%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (47%), followed by Unspecified assessment (13%), Practical (9%) and Report (7%).
- The relative weighting of examinations changed across programme stages from 44% in first year to 53% in mid-programme to 43% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 53% of first years and 59% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 67% of first years and 66% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 63% of both first and final year students.
- 18% of first years and 21% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 44% of first year and final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 45% of first years and 42% of final year students.
- 44% of first years and 56% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 52% of first years and 54% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 45% of first years and 60% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 4.8.
- 74% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 59%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (37%), followed by Practical (14%), Interview/Oral exam (9%) and In-class test/short answer/quiz (7%).
- The relative weighting of examinations decreased across programme stages from 47% in first year to 28% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 48% of first years and 59% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 51% of first years and 70% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 64% of first years and 56% of final year students.
- 9% of first years and 13% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 39% of first years and 40% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 43% of first years and 29% of final year students.
- 45% of first years and 49% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 46% of first years and 53% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 40% of first years and 54% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Health & Welfare

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 2.9.
- 43% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 63%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Project/dissertation (27%), followed by Examination (20%), Work practice (13%) and MCQ (9%).
- The relative weighting of examinations changed across programme stages from 27% in first year to 11% in mid-programme to 21% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 51% of first years and 65% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 53% of first years and 62% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 73% of first years and 67% of final year students.
- 13% of first years and 22% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 41% of first years and 42% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 41% of first years and 40% of final year students.
- 49% of first years and 58% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 47% of first years and 54% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 47% of first years and 59% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Services

Key findings from module descriptors:

- The average number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits was 4.9.
- 56% of sampled modules contained examinations and the average weighting of examinations within those modules was 68%.
- The assessment method with the highest relative weighting was Examination (38%), followed by In-class test/short answer/quiz (13%), Practical (13%) and Report (8%)
- The relative weighting of examinations changed across programme stages from 25% in first year to 50% in mid-programme to 40% in final year.

Key findings from ISSE:

- 48% of first years and 59% of final year students combined ideas from different subjects/modules often/very often when completing assignments.
- 64% of first years and 73% of final year students worked with other students on projects or assignments often/very often.
- Lecturers/teaching staff were perceived to have clearly explained course goals and requirements quite a bit/very much among 68% of first years and 66% of final year students.
- 20% of first years and 26% of final year students discussed their performance often/very often with academic staff.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided feedback on a draft or work in progress quite a bit/very much to 55% of first years and 53% of final year students.
- Lecturers/teaching staff provided prompt and detailed feedback on tests or completed assignments quite a bit/very much to 53% of first years and 46% of final year students.
- 53% of first years and 61% of final year students asked questions or contributed to discussions in class, tutorials, labs or online often/very often.
- 51% of first years and 56% of final year students explained course material to one or more students often/very often.
- 47% of first years and 51% of final year students prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students often/very often.

Conclusions

The assessment profile reported here provides an initial impression of assessment practices across Irish higher education. Although limited to a sample of 30 degree programmes, a diverse pattern of assessment methods, amounts, trends and levels of transparency is evident. The 2016 ISSE data also provided useful complementary insights regarding student experiences.

Transparency of Assessment Practices

The availability of online assessment information differs between programmes and is largely dependent on the templates used to assist staff in the compilation of online module descriptors. While some assessment decisions cannot be finalised in advance of a module beginning, it is worth reflecting on the fact that in this study's sample, 12 of 30 programmes of study did not have module descriptors available online and a further four had information that could be described as basic or limited. When considering the effectiveness of assessment within particular settings, this indicates that important principles of transparency and clarity may require some explicit attention within many higher education programmes.

From a student learning and programme quality perspective, there can also be particular value for staff in balancing flexibility with clearly documented assessment methods. If, for example, the detail of assessment methods is not listed within module descriptors, the time and space needed for such assessments may not be prioritised at the level of programme or institution.

Clear, transparent, detailed and easily accessible assessment information is important because:

- It helps to ensure that students know what is expected of them in order to plan their learning (Bloxham & Boyd, 2011).
- It helps to inform prospective students as they make their course choices.
- It can be key in facilitating better communication and co-ordination between teachers of different modules on a programme, making it easier to have an accessible view of assessment loads and types across the programme and a greater ongoing overview of which areas of assessment literacy may need to be developed.
- Student experiences and student retention within higher education are strongly impacted by the accuracy and depth of information students have at their disposal when deciding where and what to study (National Forum, 2016).

Assessment OF Learning

Assessment numbers

The findings of this profile indicate that the average number of assessments for single-semester modules was almost equal to that for full-year modules, which strongly suggests that modularisation tends to give rise to an increased number of assessments.

Numerous small assessments can be pedagogically sound, facilitating ongoing feedback on learning throughout a module and distributing student effort more evenly across a module (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Equally, the time devoted to the same assessment by different students can vary greatly depending on multiple factors, such as their levels of assessment literacy, levels of motivation, and prior learning (Fielding, 2008). It is important that the issue of assessment load is always carefully considered and taken into account when making assessment decisions. The number of assessments within modules and programmes should be benchmarked to ensure fairness across the system and weightings should be applied as a result of design, not default.

Assessment methods

Those planning assessments always face the challenge of balancing competing demands such as reliability and validity or effectiveness and efficiency. Examinations are often perceived to be the most reliable method of assessment, while other methods may have the advantage of being adaptable to different student capabilities or contexts. A variety of methods within programmes has therefore often been advocated (Brown, 2001; McDowell, 2012). Our findings show more variety of method was evident in some fields than others and that there were differing trends across programme stages, reflecting the fact that different methods can be suited to different learning situations at different stages of a programme. There are many factors influencing the choices staff make regarding assessment methods in higher education. These include national and institutional policies, traditional practices within disciplines, the size and diversity of the student cohort, the nature of the learning being assessed, the familiarity of staff and students with given methods and the amount of available time and resources. Again, the important consideration is that method choices are deliberate and matched to the demands of the specific context.

Assessment FOR/AS Learning

The findings from ISSE 2016 give us some idea of the level of Assessment FOR and AS Learning taking place in Irish higher education. Assessment is often at its best when it represents an ongoing process, involving a continuous interaction between lecturer and student (Evans, 2010). The ISSE data indicates that over 75% of students don't discuss their performance with staff often. It also shows that students in some fields are more likely than those in others to receive feedback from lecturers/teaching staff. In some fields, the likelihood of receiving feedback is higher in first year than in final year. Further, the ISSE findings show that final year students engage in Assessment AS Learning practices more often than first year students. Whereas received feedback (Assessment FOR Learning) is especially important in first year, when students are being introduced to new ways of thinking and engaging with their learning (Noonan & O'Neill, 2012), it is also important that staff ensure students begin to develop their self-monitoring skills (Assessment AS Learning) in the early years of their programme.

This research has shown that while there is much evidence of diversity, innovation and commitment to effective assessment in Irish higher education, there remains scope for further enhancement. It is challenging to provide assessment that is clear, transparent, fair, and pedagogically sound while also being engaging, motivating and innovative. There is strong potential to strike such a challenging balance in the way that assessment experts such as Knight (2000) suggest. By embracing such possibilities, we can work towards assessment practices that can both evaluate and stimulate learning.

Acknowledgements

The Forum would like to express its sincere gratitude to the institutional staff who kindly provided the assessment documentation which formed the basis of this report. Gratitude is also extended to Sean O'Reilly, for taking the time to provide data from the 2016 ISSE, which has added substantially to the profile.

References

- Bloxham, S., & Boyd, P. (2008). *Developing effective assessment in higher education: A practical guide*. Maidenhead: Open University Press McGraw-Hill.
- Brown, G. (2001). *Assessment. A guide for lecturers*. Retrieved from: http://www.flinders.edu.au/Teaching_and_Learning_Files/Documents/Assessment%20-%20A%20guide%20for%20lecturers.pdf
- Campus Entrepreneurship Enterprise Network (CEEN). (2016). *NEAR Project: National entrepreneurship assessment review*. Retrieved from: <http://i0.wp.com/www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NEAR-National-Forum-Poster-Template-A1-Slide-page-001-723x1024.jpg>
- Earl, L. M., & Katz, S. (2006). *Rethinking classroom assessment with purpose in mind: Assessment for, as and of learning*. Retrieved from: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/wncp/full_doc.pdf
- Evans, C. (2010). Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(1), 70-120.
- Fielding, A. (2008). *Student assessment workloads: A review*. Retrieved from: <http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/ltia/issue17/fielding.php>
- Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C. (2004). Conditions under which assessment supports student learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*. 1, 3-31.
- Knight, P.T. (2000). The value of a programme-wide approach to assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 25(3), 237-251.
- Higher Education Authority. (2016). *The Irish survey of student engagement (ISSE). Results from 2016*. Retrieved from: <http://studentsurvey.ie/survey-results/>
- McDowell, L. (2012). *Programme focused assessment. A short guide*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pass.brad.ac.uk/short-guide.pdf>
- National Forum. (2016). *Reaching out: Why students leave*. Dublin: National Forum.
- Noonan, E., & O'Neill, G. (2012). Student engagement and assessment: The first year experience. In J. Hughes & E. Tan (Eds.). *The dynamic curriculum: Shared experiences of on-going curricula change in higher education* (pp. 72-91). Dublin: Dublin City University.
- Rowntree, D. (1987). *Assessing students - how shall we know them?* London: Kogan Page.
- Scott, L. & Fortune, C. (2011) Formative assessment practices in built environment higher education programmes and the enhancement of the student learning experience. In *Proceedings of Association of Researcher in Construction Management (ARCOM) 2011*. Bristol: ARCM.

Appendix A

Detail of Methodology

Decisions made before selecting programmes

A number of decisions were necessary before selecting programmes to be profiled:

- It was decided to select 30 programmes to profile. This figure was chosen to allow three programmes to be selected from each of the ten ISCED fields of study and to allow the profile to be completed in a timely manner.
- It was decided to restrict the number of semesters profiled within each programme to three: the first semester, the final semester and one mid-programme semester (semester three of three-year programmes and semester five of four/five-year programmes). While it is acknowledged that this decision limited the profile sample somewhat, it was necessary in order to lessen the burden on institutional staff who would be requested to gather module descriptors on behalf of the Forum where such were not available online.
- In order to ensure a spread of institution types, it was decided that one programme would be selected from each institute of technology (14), one from each university (7), and two each from colleges of education and HECA colleges. The remaining five programmes would then be selected from the largest universities (3) and the largest institutes of technology (2).
- Given the decision to include three programmes from each of the ten ICSED fields of study in which undergraduate degree courses are available in Ireland, it was decided that each programme should be selected from a different sub-field within each field. The aim in selecting sub-fields was to choose the most populous sub-fields while also ensuring that a range of subject areas were covered. The following list of sub-fields was selected prior to selecting programmes to profile:

ICSED Field of Study	ICSED Sub-field
(1) Education	(0112) Training for pre-school teachers
	(0113) Teacher training without subject specialization
	(0114) Teacher training with subject specialization
(2) Arts & Humanities	(0210) Arts not further defined or elsewhere classified
	(0211) Audio-visual techniques and media production
	(0220) Humanities (except languages) not further defined or elsewhere classified
(3) Social Sciences, Journalism & Information	(0310) Social and behavioural sciences not further defined or elsewhere classified
	(0313) Psychology
	(0314) Sociology and cultural studies
(4) Business, Administration & Law	(0410) Business and administration not further defined or elsewhere classified
	(0411) Accounting and taxation
	(0421) Law
(5) Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics	(0510) Biological and related sciences not further defined or elsewhere classified
	(0531) Chemistry
	(0533) Physics
(6) Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs)	(0610) ICTs not further defined or elsewhere
	(0611) Computer use
	(0613) Software and applications development and analysis
(7) Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction	(0710) Engineering and engineering trades not further defined or elsewhere classified
	(0715) Mechanics and metal trades
	(0714) Electronics and automation
(8) Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary	(0811) Crop and livestock production
	(0812) Horticulture
	(0841) Veterinary
(9) Health & Welfare	(0912) Medicine
	(0913) Nursing and midwifery
	(0923) Social work and counselling
(10) Services	(1013) Hotel, restaurants and catering
	(1014) Sports
	(1015) Travel, tourism and leisure

Random selection of programmes for inclusion in profile

- All undergraduate degree courses listed in CAO 2015 were exported to Excel and categorised according to ICSED field of study. The programme lists within each field were then randomised.
- Within each field of study, the first programme in the random list associated with each of the three chosen sub-fields was then selected for inclusion in the profile.
- To ensure an institutional spread, a random choice was rejected in favour of the next random choice if, for example, the given institution or institution type was over-represented.

Accessing module descriptors

All module descriptors were initially sought on institutional websites. Where such were not available online, key staff within given institutions were contacted and requested to forward the module descriptors, or equivalent programme documentation students received regarding the given modules. Contacted staff included programme co-ordinators, heads of department, or registrars, depending on the structure of the programme. All institutional contacts provided the most up-to-date module descriptors/programme documentation available at the time of request. In the case of the final semester module descriptors, these were often those from the previous year(s) because descriptors for the coming year had not yet been finalised.

Extraction of data from module descriptors

An assessment profile database was compiled based on module descriptors from all modules across three semesters of the 30 selected programmes. The compilation of this database involved the extraction of the following information, if available, from each module descriptor:

- ECTS credits for the module
- Assessment methods included in the module
- Percentage weighting of each assessment method
- Number of instances of each assessment method
- Timing of each assessment
- Any extra description which may inform our understanding of the given assessments

Detail of calculations used in analysing the data

- **Calculating the number of individual assessments**
 - Some module descriptors did not break down the number of assessments where a given assessment method was continuous, e.g. a module descriptor might just mention 10% for 'practical assessments' without indicating how many practical assessments were involved.
 - Other module descriptors, however, listed the exact number of instances of individual assessments in such cases (e.g. 10 practical tests worth 1% each).
 - In order to ensure an imbalance was not created in the number of assessments by the differing levels of transparency between module descriptors, it was decided to treat as one assessment instances of multiple assessments worth 5% or less each, where such assessments were of the same type in the same module.

- This means that a weekly practical test of 1% per week over ten weeks was recorded in the profile as 'practical' worth 10%. The overall number of individual assessments mentioned in this report is, therefore, a minimum figure.

- **Calculating the number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits**

The following formula was used to calculate the number of assessments per 10 ECTS credits:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of assessments in given field}}{\text{Sum of ECTS credits for all modules in the given field}^*} \times 10$$

- * For this calculation, the total number of ECTS credits included the full credit load for each module, irrespective of whether the module was a full-year or single semester module.

- **Calculating the relative weighting of assessments**

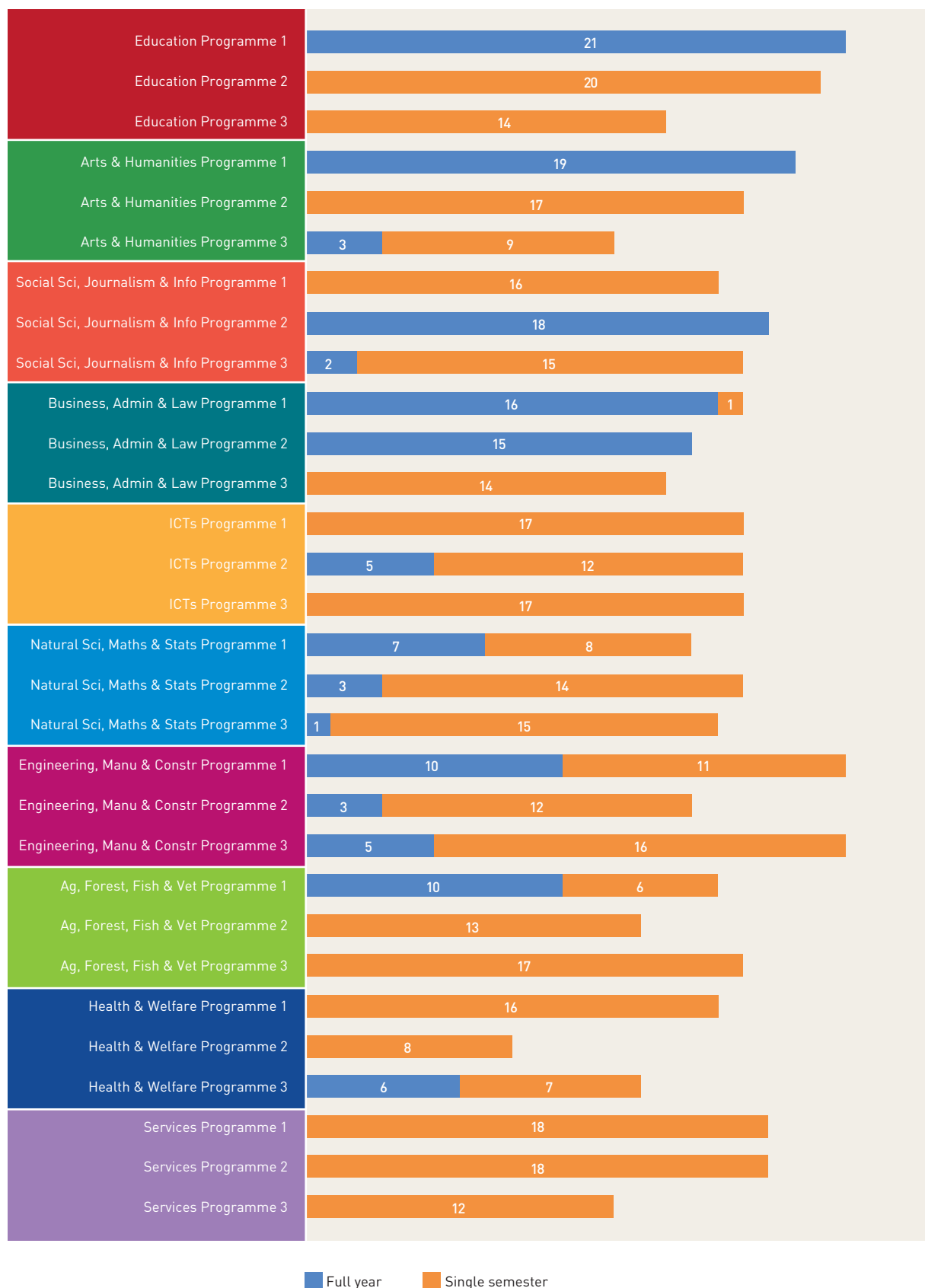
The following formula was used to calculate the relative weighting of assessments:

$$\frac{\text{ECTS credit load of module for the semester}^*}{\text{ECTS credit load of full semester}} \times \text{\% of module assessment weight allocated to given assessment}$$

- * In order to calculate the credit load for a single semester in this calculation, the ECTS value of any included full-year modules was halved. While it is acknowledged that student effort hours are not always split evenly between two semesters of a full-year module, this was the most accurate calculation possible.

Appendix B

Number of Full-Year and Single-Semester Modules in Sampled Semesters of Selected Programmes



Appendix C

Weighting of Assessment Methods by Field of Study

	Education	Arts & Humanities	Social Sci, Journalism & Info	Business, Admin & Law	Natural Sci, Maths & Stats	ICTs	Engineering, Manu & Constr	Agri, Forest, Fish & Vet	Health & Welfare	Services
Examination	19%	32%	40%	57%	57%	29%	47%	37%	20%	38%
Project/Dissertation	15%	14%	9%	9%	1%	19%	4%	6%	27%	6%
Practical	5%	1%	0%	3%	7%	13%	9%	14%	6%	13%
Unspecified	5%	16%	3%	3%	10%	8%	13%	5%	3%	5%
Essay	11%	10%	23%	4%	3%	1%	1%	0%	6%	2%
In-class test/short answer/quiz	1%	5%	1%	8%	1%	6%	6%	7%	2%	13%
Other	7%	5%	5%	7%	4%	9%	3%	2%	4%	3%
Portfolio	11%	5%	7%	0%	4%	0%	1%	6%	1%	4%
Report	0%	1%	3%	1%	1%	5%	7%	7%	0%	8%
Work practice	8%	0%	0%	0%	4%	2%	0%	0%	13%	0%
Presentation	7%	2%	3%	1%	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%
MCQ	1%	2%	0%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	9%	1%
Interview/Oral exam	4%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	9%	2%	0%
Journal/Reflections	6%	3%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Lab work/book	0%	2%	3%	0%	3%	0%	3%	2%	0%	1%
Case study/note	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Attendance/participation	0%	0%	3%	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%

Appendix D

Weighting of Assessment Methods Across Programme Stages by Field of Study

	Education			Arts & Humanities			Social Sci, Journalism & Info			Business, Admin & Law			Natural Sci, Maths & Stats		
	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End
Examination	29%	18%	11%	29%	33%	36%	51%	33%	35%	53%	57%	63%	60%	54%	56%
Project/Dissertation	3%	14%	28%	13%	13%	14%	1%	11%	15%	9%	10%	9%	0%	4%	0%
Practical	11%	2%	1%	0%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	5%	0%	13%	7%	0%
Unspecified	8%	1%	7%	16%	26%	6%	2%	6%	3%	3%	0%	5%	12%	12%	6%
Essay	10%	12%	11%	9%	10%	9%	24%	32%	13%	3%	3%	4%	1%	6%	1%
In-class test/short answer/quiz	0%	3%	0%	9%	6%	1%	1%	2%	1%	9%	13%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Other	8%	3%	10%	10%	2%	4%	7%	4%	3%	10%	4%	8%	7%	4%	0%
Portfolio	14%	13%	7%	0%	0%	14%	4%	6%	12%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%
Report	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	1%	0%	4%	0%	0%	2%
Work practice	0%	12%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%
Presentation	3%	12%	6%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	9%
MCQ	0%	3%	0%	4%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	8%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Interview/Oral exam	1%	3%	6%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Journal/Reflections	12%	4%	1%	6%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Lab work/book	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	3%	5%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%
Case study/note	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Attendance/participation	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	2%

ICTs			Engineering, Manu & Constr			Agri, Forest, Fish & Vet			Health & Welfare			Services		
Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End	Start	Middle	End
26%	37%	23%	44%	53%	43%	47%	36%	28%	27%	11%	21%	25%	50%	40%
18%	10%	29%	1%	2%	11%	6%	2%	11%	12%	33%	37%	6%	8%	4%
5%	30%	3%	11%	12%	3%	14%	15%	12%	13%	1%	4%	19%	12%	8%
14%	8%	0%	26%	6%	8%	8%	3%	3%	9%	0%	1%	3%	2%	9%
3%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	8%	7%	2%	2%	3%
13%	3%	2%	6%	5%	6%	10%	6%	6%	6%	0%	0%	16%	12%	12%
4%	4%	18%	0%	0%	8%	2%	1%	4%	12%	1%	0%	8%	0%	2%
0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	3%	14%	0%	0%	3%	7%	2%	2%
5%	2%	8%	1%	5%	14%	1%	13%	6%	0%	0%	0%	2%	10%	11%
0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	6%	0%	0%	0%
2%	1%	5%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	3%	4%	0%	2%
4%	3%	1%	2%	4%	2%	2%	0%	3%	11%	11%	6%	3%	0%	0%
4%	0%	1%	4%	1%	0%	0%	17%	11%	1%	0%	4%	1%	0%	0%
0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	2%	6%
0%	0%	0%	4%	5%	0%	5%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	8%	0%	0%	1%
1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%



National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
in Higher Education

c/o 19 Dawson Street

Dublin 2

T: +353 1 6090648

info@teachingandlearning.ie

DOI: 10.6084/m9.figshare.4592089.v1

www.teachingandlearning.ie