QA22 University Assessment Policy: Assessment volume equivalences and format choice

Classification – *Public*

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Introduction

This policy sets out the expected volume ranges of assessment for modules on credit-bearing programmes at Arden University, with emphasis on student effort and time.

About this policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with, amongst others,

- QA87 – penalties for exceeding assessment size limits

Who is covered by the policy?

This policy applies to all assessments on credit-bearing programmes of Arden University, including those which form part of an Arden University programme through a collaboration or partnership provider.

Definitions

- **Volume:** the length, duration or quantity of assessment to be submitted
- **Range:** upper and lower volume limits that are acceptable for a module
- **Equivalence:** the concept that one type of assessment requires the same amount of time and effort as another format.

Policy responsibilities

- Our Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy complies with internal and external regulatory requirements. The Academic Framework, Regulation and Policy Committee have delegated authority from the Academic Board for the approval and ongoing review of this policy.
- The Head of Assessment has primary and day-to-day responsibility for developing and implementing this policy, monitoring its use and effectiveness, and the ongoing review of procedures to ensure they are effective.
- Management at all levels are responsible for ensuring those reporting to them understand this policy and how it applies to them.
- All colleagues are responsible for ensuring they understand this policy and how it applies to them.

Principles

The purpose of establishing these expectations at a University level is to ensure that:

- **Sector Consistency:** Volumes of assessment remain consistent with sector standards and expectations

- **Standardisation:** There is a level of consistency in volume of assessment across all Arden University programmes, regardless of the subject

- **Transparency:** The University is transparent in its approach to setting assessment and effectively communicates this to both staff and students.

- **Range:** For students, assessment preparation should occupy 20-30% of notional study hours: i.e. for every 30 credit module (300 module hours), 60-90 of these hours shall be allocated for direct assessment activities. For legacy 20-credit modules (200 module hours), 40-60 of these hours shall be allocated for direct assessment activities.

- **Separation of teaching and assessment:** Assessment should be completed by students independently, outside of taught sessions. The 20-30% of notional study hours devoted to summative assessment must be distinct from timetabled teaching time.

- **Equivalence:** The framework below sets out the amounts of different types of work that may be required for a one-part assessment worth 100% of a 30 credit module. For multipart assessments the volume should be reduced proportionately to the percentage weighting of the assessment, provided that the recommended upper limit of 30% of notional study hours devoted to assessment is not exceeded. For 60 credit modules these volumes should be doubled. A separate table is presented for legacy 20-credit modules. The same premises relating to multiplying up and down credit volumes apply.

- **Choice and flexibility:** In setting out the above equivalences, this framework enables staff to set assessments in a variety of formats with confidence, and also permits a degree of student choice in the presentation of their work, where module and programme learning outcomes allow this.

Notes on the equivalences tables

- **Components vs portfolios:** The lower limit for a portfolio is three pieces of work across all levels. Normally, where a module assessment requires two pieces of work in different formats, they will be presented as two distinct components.

Appendices

- Material contained in appendices is not included within the volume limits and will not count towards a student's mark.
- Appendices will normally only be necessary where there is **EITHER** 1) a large amount of original source material that the student needs to refer to within

the assessment (e.g. data gathered for a project) **OR** 2) to authenticate the work (e.g. sketches submitted as part of a creative process, evidence of a process that the student reflects on).

- The assessment brief and marking criteria will specify the requirements of any appendices, and clarify to students the consequences of not submitting them.

Equivalences table: 30 credits

Assessment Type	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Written work (including essays, case studies, written reflection, and reports)	2500 – 3500 Words	3000 – 4500 Words	3500 – 5000 Words	4000 – 5500 Words	5000 – 6000 Words
Individual presentations or oral tasks (e.g. podcast, explanation, commentary)	12-18 minutes	15-22 minutes	20-25 minutes	25-30 minutes	30-35 minutes
Group presentations or interactive oral tasks (e.g. dialogue, role play, interview, group discussion)	15-20 minutes	20-25 minutes	25-30 minutes	30-40 minutes	35-45 minutes
Portfolios (minimum 3 pieces). Portfolios will not exceed the total permitted volume for the format(s) included.	Up to 6 pieces of work	Up to 7 pieces of work	Up to 8 pieces of work	Up to 10 pieces of work	Up to 12 pieces of work
Exams (timed written exams and practical exams, MCQs)	1.5-2 hours	2 – 2.5 hours	2.5 – 3 hours	3-4.5 hours No one exam to exceed three hours	3-4.5 hours No one exam to exceed three hours
Alternative format coursework (e.g. posters, mathematical problems, code, animation, multimedia outputs, digital art)	Must be achievable by a student working at the pass threshold within 60-90 hours Volume of assessment to be expressed in terms relevant to the task (not word equivalence) Departments must ensure that assessment loads are consistent across modules				

**PSRB Regulations may over-ride, if necessary, but where possible use guidance in conjunction*

Equivalences table: legacy 20 credit modules

Assessment Type	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Written Work (e.g. essays, case studies, magazine articles)	1500 – 2500 Words	2000 – 3000 Words	2500 – 3500 Words	3000 – 4000 Words	3500 – 4500 Words
Non-written Coursework (e.g. mathematical problems, code, diagrams/equations)	5 pages max	4-8 pages	5-10 pages	5-10 pages	5-14 pages
Presentations/ oral tasks	8-12 minutes	8-15 minutes	10-20 minutes	15-20 minutes	15-20 minutes
Reports (e.g. research based reports, lab reports, business analysis reports)	1500 – 2500 Words	1500-2500 Words	2000-3000 Words	2500-3500 Words	3500-4500 Words
Reflective Pieces (e.g. journal, reflective blog)	2000-2500 Words	2500-3500 Words	2500-3500 Words	3000-4000 Words	3000-4000 Words
Posters with narration transcripts	1500-2500 word transcript	1500-2500 word transcript	2500-3500 word transcript	2500-3500 word transcript	3000-3500 word transcript
Posters without narration transcripts	750-1500 word poster	1000-2000 word poster	1500-2500 word poster	1500-2500 word poster	2000-3000 word poster
Portfolios	3-5 pieces of work	3-5 pieces of work	4-7 pieces of work	5-9 pieces of work	5-9 pieces of work
Audio-visual creative output (podcast, media production, animation, video, digital art)	5 minutes	5-7 minutes	7-10 minutes	10-15 minutes	10-15 minutes
Exams (timed written exams and practical exams, MCQs)	1-2 hours	1.5 – 2.5 hours	1.5 – 2.5 hours	2 – 3 hours	2 – 3 hours
Dissertations/ major projects * 40 credit				6000 – 9,000 words	7,000 – 10,000 words

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Responsible Department:	**CELT**
Policy Contact:	**Head of Assessment**
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Policy Classification:	**Academic**

Record of Amendments			
Date	Version Number	Details of Change	Approval
July 2025	2	Updated to clarify policy can be applied to modules of any credit value.	15th July 2025
October 2026	3	Updated to • focus on 30 credit rather than 20 credit modules, whilst retaining coverage of the latter for teach-out purposes • clarify points of confusion from the previous version • simplify the range of assessment types to avoid confusion in determining ranges.	October 2026