

Excerpt from the final report of the Assessment Project in School of Politics and International Relations, based on the TESTA method.

Key findings of the audit and discussions with programme convenors and students were:

- Swift return of feedback (within 14 days of submission) is likely to encourage use of feedback.
- High summative (49), low formative (3), and high variety of assessment (13) may lead students to be uncertain about assessment goals and standards.
- High variety (13) can be counter-productive if there are not sufficient low-risk opportunities to practice different assessment formats.
- Low oral feedback (59 minutes) is likely to compound lack of certainty about goals and standards.
- The combination of timely feedback, clear written criteria, and high volumes of written feedback (7527 words) may help to clarify goals and standards.
- High proportion of exams (26.5%) may have positive consequences for coverage of the syllabus, depending on whether it is easy or not for students to 'spot' topics. However, exams may lead to surface learning (memorising facts), depending on the level of challenge and the preparatory time.
- Brief but challenging tasks (16/49) are a good way of distributing effort and sustaining engagement, especially when balanced with longer tasks as in the Politics/IR course.
- In a climate of low oral feedback, reaction papers (as described by one first year module convenor) provide a good means of developing the pedagogic relationship, and helping students think through questions raised by the course.
- The Politics/IR programme builds up skills towards the dissertation through different elements of summative assessment.

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