1. Optimising my time and effort
2. Making Assessment Decisions
3. Harnessing interests and personal goals
4. Receiving feedback proactively
5. Acting on feedback
6. Seeking interaction and dialogue
7. Understanding ‘good’ performance

Mindful Academic Practices (MAPs)
Getting the most out of assessment and feedback
To what extent do you plan your response to assessment tasks so as to programme in regular and timely study?

Consider this

Assessment is fundamentally about learning!

- Try to remember that, whilst assessment tasks are designed to direct your attention on to what needs to be done, it is the learning bit that matters!
- Planning a clear and structured programme of work in response to assessment tasks allows you to focus on the ‘process’ of learning leading to the final submission.
- Working backwards from an assignment deadline, break down the task into clear actionable steps that will enable you to focus on key aspects of the work – start with a draft plan or concept map.

Ask yourself

- How can I best manage the assessment process around my other known commitments (work, University, family)?
- What are the specific requirements of the assessment task? Do I understand what is expected of me?
- Do I have other assessment work I need to complete at the same time? If so, how can I prioritise work so that I progress all work appropriately?
- Can I pair up compatible tasks across different assessments? Which assessment tasks share similar or related learning outcomes, subject-matter, tools and/or skills?
- How can I plan my work so that I create ‘space’ enough to focus deeply on the task(s) set?
To what extent are you able to choose (or shape) topics and/or methods of assessment in your course to better align with your learning needs?

Consider this

Accepting greater responsibility for the topic, method, and/or approach to assessment activities helps to personalise your assessment journey and learning.

- Personal responsibility and accountability for evaluating performance and seeking/acting on feedback is an important graduate outcome.
- Choice in this sense is fundamentally about making balanced decisions about your learning goals and should focus on how you want to improve and develop in the present task and beyond.
- It might seem an odd thing, but focusing on performance goals (i.e. prioritising grades) instead of learning goals encourages short-term thinking and a narrow pass/fail focus.

Ask yourself

- What interests me about the assessment task? What do I want to know that I don’t know today?
- Other than a good grade, what do I want to achieve through completing the assessment task? What will successfully completing the assessment task give me?
- Read the assessment brief and requirements carefully – is there scope for me to build or shape the assessment work around my learning needs?
- If there is a choice between methods of assessment (i.e. written task or presentation) which of the available methods best meet my learning needs?
To what extent are you building your assessment experiences around your subject and professional interests and goals?

**Consider this**

Building assessment work around personal interests and goals leads to meaningful learning for the long-term.

- Positive learning experiences occur when there is a sense that personal development goals are being achieved.
- Know what's important to you – what do you value most in your own learning and development? i.e. creativity, cooperation, inclusivity …
- Seeking out opportunities for early engagement through practising tasks (i.e. a draft action plan or concept map) helps to build confidence and competence for completing formal assessment work.

**Ask yourself**

- In what ways can you ‘fit’ your subject interests with the assessment task?
- Do I have a good understanding of how I want to develop through this module and how this assessment can help me achieve this?
- How can I work to approach assessment tasks so as to align with what is important to me (my values)?
- How can I use the knowledge acquired across my other modules to inform my development in and through this particular assessment task? Where are the obvious connections – and how can I build on them?
To what extent are you actively seeking out and then making full use of opportunities to get feedback on my work?

Consider this

Regularly seeking out specific and timely information on your progress helps to hone and develop your current and future work and learning.

- Feedback information doesn’t have to be tutor-led!
- A focus on marks and grades alone won’t help you move beyond your present level of understanding and standard of performance.
- A key role of feedback is to explain to you the gaps in your knowledge and understanding.
- Feedback will usually also direct you towards appropriate future study practices and how to close the gaps in your knowledge and understanding – pay close attention to this ‘feedforward’ information.

Ask yourself

- Am I clear on how to improve my work from the feedback I have received?
- If I am not clear on how to improve my work from the feedback I have received, what opportunities do I have to seek out greater clarify and/or support?
- What opportunities are there for me to receive feedback information early on in the assessment process to help me gauge my progress – can I make use of tutorials or seminars to discuss assessment tasks with peers and not just my tutor?
- How can I use the feedback I receive, alongside the assessment criteria and learning outcomes of my course to accurately self-assess and self-correct my performance in future work?
To what extent are you clear on ways to actively improve your work from the feedback you have received?

Consider this

Feedback needs to lead to meaningful action in order to improve learning and performance.

- It can feel like using feedback is pointless because you have different assessments for different modules and you might not feel you’re able to meaningfully work on areas of weakness.

- Even if you understand the feedback, it can be difficult to know what practical steps to take to improve your work and learning.

- Seeking out and employing feedback from a variety of sources helps to develop a full range of outcomes from your assessment experiences – feedback does not have to be written down to be feedback!

Ask yourself

- Are there opportunities for me to gain different perspectives on feedback through peer dialogue or participation in debrief tutorial or seminar activities (can I initiate these online with my peers)?

- Can you write down 1-3 action points alongside the feedback you have received identifying ‘next steps’ to improving your performance?

- Can I access information on assessments completed (past work) and still to come on my course to give me a sense of (a) my progress to date, and (b) where there will be opportunities to address my action points through future work?

- Revisit and re-assess your long-term goals – in what ways can you maintain and/or stretch your learning goals in subsequent work? What skills and resources will offer the greatest scope moving forwards in your practice?
What opportunities are there for me to engage in active discussion (with my peers and/or tutors) around assessment tasks?

**Consider this**

Having regular dialogue and interaction around assessment tasks, criteria and learning outcomes helps to clarify expectations for assessment tasks.

- Activities that are interactive, iterative and open-ended are best suited to dialogue (such as group discussions or peer-review of draft work).
- Seeking out and discussing examples of quality work similar to the assessment task set helps to build a picture of what ‘good’ looks like and how assessment criteria apply in practice.
- Where face-to-face interaction is a challenge (i.e. in online learning scenarios) different digital media platforms offer a range of real-time options for facilitating meaningful interaction and dialogue.

**Ask yourself**

- Can I seek out opportunities for my peers and I to assess and provide feedback on each other’s work using (pre)set criteria (perhaps using exemplar work) as a formative activity (pre-submission)?
- Can I make use of online forums or tools to provide opportunities for dialogue as part of the assessment process?
- Can I plan my response to the assessment task by producing, and sharing with my peers, a concept map or plan for the task set, providing and receiving informal feedback on possible improvements based on the accepted assessment criteria?
- What is the earliest opportunity I will have to reflect on my progress in relation to the assessment task prior to submission?
- What two questions do I want to ask about my progress that will, through dialogue with my peers/tutor, help to move me forwards?
To what extent do you have opportunities to engage actively with the specific goals and criteria of assessment tasks?

Consider this

Developing and demonstrating the ability to judge the quality of your own work and the work of others against set criteria is central to life-long learning.

- Making informed judgements about your work is a skill that needs to be honed and developed and might not come naturally to you.
- Participating in regular dialogue with your peers and tutors around assessment tasks and criteria will help to enhance your understanding of the assessment processes and standards used to judge your performance.

Ask yourself

- Can I identify explicit marking criteria and performance-level definitions alongside clear descriptions of academic requirements for the assessment task set?
- As an initial independent task, can I reformulate the stated assessment criteria in my own words?
- Can I seek out/create opportunities for discussion and reflection around assessment criteria early on in the assessment process to clarify and check both their meaning and level of expectation?
- Can I seek out practical examples of similar work to that set out in the assessment task? Can I ‘see’ the criteria in this work? Can I seek out and consider different perspectives on these exemplars from my peers?