

# Common Challenges and Potential Solutions for Balancing the Workload, Flow, Organization, and Weighting of Course Assessments



**GOAL:** Consider common challenges with assessment workload, balance, flow, organization, and weighting, and possible strategies, solutions, and resources towards a more effective course assessment plan.

Common Challenge	As a result, students...	Potential Solutions and Strategies
Assessment does not effectively assess the course learning outcome(s)	Perceive a high workload, assessments as unfair or as “busywork”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <a href="#">constructive alignment</a> to ensure that assessments effectively assess your learning outcomes</li> <li>Choose <b>different assessment types</b> that align with your outcomes (see our <a href="#">Sample Assessment Strategies for Different Learning Outcomes</a> and <a href="#">Alternative Assessment Formats</a> sites)</li> <li>Use an <b>Assessment Outline</b> to communicate how the assessment is aligned with the course learning outcomes and other relevant goals (page 40 of our <a href="#">Adapting your Assessments guide</a>)</li> </ul>
Too many assessments or too much perceived or actual workload associated with assessments	Perceive a high workload, request extensions, miss assignments, submit late or incomplete assignments, commit acts of academic dishonesty or misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>Worksheet 1: Identifying Assessment Challenges in my Course</b> and <b>Worksheet 3: Outlining my Course Assessment Plan</b> to visualize your assessments across the semester</li> <li>Use the <a href="#">Student Workload Calculator</a> and <a href="#">Time on Task</a> to estimate the time to complete assessments and other course activities</li> <li>Use the <b>Assessment Outline</b> and <b>Checklist</b> to communicate workload expectations for each assessment (page 39-41 of our <a href="#">Adapting your Assessments guide</a>)</li> <li>Integrate low-stakes assessments so students can practice, distribute the workload, and get feedback prior to high-stakes assessments (see <b>Finding the Balance between Low and High Stakes Assessment</b> handout)</li> <li>Use strategies to support <a href="#">student self-regulation and self-directed learning</a></li> <li>Use strategies to encourage <a href="#">academic integrity with assessment</a></li> <li>If students submit multiple assessments within a single category (e.g., weekly discussion posts, quizzes), consider a <a href="#">drop the lowest grade policy</a> to offer flexibility and lessen workload</li> <li>Provide <b>choice</b> with the topic or format of the assessment (e.g., students can choose to submit a podcast, video presentation, infographic, etc.)</li> <li>Have some weeks in the semester when nothing is due</li> </ul>



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Common Challenge	As a result, students...	Potential Solutions and Strategies
Weight of an assessment doesn't match the actual effort or time needed to complete it	Students perceive a high workload or disconnect between the workload and the weighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the <a href="#">Student Workload Calculator</a> and <a href="#">Time on Task</a> to estimate the time to complete assessments and other course activities</li> <li>Use the <b>Assessment Outline</b> and <b>Checklist</b> to communicate workload expectations for each assessment (page 39-41 of our <a href="#">Adapting your Assessments guide</a>)</li> <li>Consider changing the weighting of assessments or providing students with <b>choice about weighting</b> (see the <a href="#">Should the weighting of assessments change?</a> section of our <a href="#">Adapting your Assessments guide</a>, page 8)</li> </ul>
Assessments were not evenly or effectively distributed throughout the course	Perceive a high workload, request extensions, miss assignments, submit late or incomplete assignments, commit acts of academic dishonesty or misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>Worksheet 1: Identifying Assessment Challenges in my Course</b> and <b>Worksheet 3: Outlining my Course Assessment Plan</b> to visualize your assessments across the semester</li> <li>Provide <b>flexible deadline options</b>, such as grace periods, a date range for submitting assessments, or “late passes” that allow students to turn in one assignment late without penalty (see <a href="#">How do I build in student choice or flexibility with my assessments?</a> section of our <a href="#">Adapting your Assessments guide</a>, page 7)</li> <li>Develop a <b>consistent routine</b> of low-stakes assessments so that students have a predictable structure for each week of the course (e.g., discussion posts are due every Thursday). See our <a href="#">Planning the Structure of your Course guide</a>, pages 5-7, for examples.</li> </ul>

For general advice related to blended and hybrid course design, see our [Key Effective Practices in Blended and Hybrid Courses](#) handout.

## Potential Strategies to Address High Grading and Feedback Workload

If grading and feedback takes too much time, or if students do not typically use the feedback provided by instructor/TAs:

- For **general suggestions** about efficient grading, see:
  - [Grading and Providing Feedback: Suggestions for Efficient and Effective Feedback and Grading](#)
  - [Ten Tips for More Efficient and Effective Grading](#)
  - [Strategies for More Efficient Grading](#)
- Incorporate **different types of feedback** to lessen the grading workload, including self-assessment, peer feedback, and instructor class-wide feedback. See our [Adapting your Assessments guide](#) (page 37-38) and this [Feedback Opportunities in Online Learning](#) resource.
- Create **detailed rubrics or checklists** for student and instructor/TA use. See OpenEd's presentation on [Rubrics and Equitable Assessment](#).
- Use **automatic grading and directed feedback** with [CourseLink quizzes](#)

