

**BRIEF SUMMARY OF SMALL SELECTION OF SOURCES ON ASSESSMENT  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

- **ASSESSMENT** refers to assessment of student's work.
- These points are derived from a cursory reading of two main texts on the topic of Assessment in Higher Education:
  - **ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING in Higher Education,**  
Edited by Peter Knight, Kogan Page, 1998
  - **ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION** by Professor  
Heywood (Trinity College), 1976?
- **ASSESSMENT** of student's work refers to a variety of exercises such as
  - Essays
  - Projects / individual and team
  - Aural and Oral Examinations and Interviews
  - Multiple choice...
- Markers should have in mind the normal curve unless they have valid reasons for departing from it.
- A suggested guide for marking essays is as follows:
  - **80 = outstanding answer: shows independent reading and thinking**
  - **70 = Best possible organization of all expected material**
  - **60 = Well organized use of major points**
  - **50 = Sensible use of some major points**
  - **45 = Clear signs of understanding but material thin**
  - **40 = pass, some relevant material but incomplete grasp**
  - **30 = Not an answer to the question set, but shows some understanding of the general field**
  - **20 = very muddled, but shows some understanding of the general field**
  - **10 = Poorly organized and almost completely lacking in relevance**
- **General guideleines:**
  - Bloom (1956) suggested six levels of cognitive abilities which are / should be developed in students in higher education, these are,  
*Knowledge* ( of facts, terms, theories...)
  - *Comprehension* (understanding of the meaning of this knowledge)
  - *Application* (the ability to apply this knowledge and comprehension in new concrete situations)

*Analysis* (the ability to break the material down into its constituent parts and to see the relationship between them)

*Synthesis* (the ability to re-assemble these parts into a new and meaningful relationship, thus forming a new whole)

*Evaluation* (the ability to judge the value of material using explicit and coherent criteria, either of one's own devising or derived from the work of others)

Gronlund (1968) summarized his review of research on the marking of essay examinations as follows:

- Use essay questions to measure complex learning outcomes only
  - Relate the questions as directly as possible to the learning outcomes being measured
  - Formulate questions which present a clear, definite task to the student
  - Do not permit students a choice of questions unless the learning outcome requires it.
  - Provide ample time for answering and give suggested time limits for each question
  - Evaluate answers to essay questions in terms of the learning outcomes being measured.
  - Score restricted response answers by the point method, using a model answer as a guide.
  - Grade extended response answers by the rating method, using clearly defined criteria as a guide.
  - Evaluate all of the student's answers to one question before proceeding to the next question.
  - Evaluate student's answers to essay questions anonymously.
  - Have two or more persons grade each answer, wherever possible.
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- Continuing some general guidelines: there is some research on the strengths and weaknesses of 'objective' tests. I conclude that these are multiple choice tests where the correct answer is not disputed!
  - Strengths are: can pose a whole series of precise problems which can be clearly stated and quickly answered

**Can provide a wide content of coverage.  
Can be speedily and accurately marked  
Can be tried out in advance (pre-tested), and tests of differing  
Levels of difficulty can be constructed.**

- \* Weaknesses are : cannot test written expression or a candidate's ability to develop an argument**
- Can all too easily test only factual recall or simple Understanding of facts**
- \* May encourage candidates to guess**
- Objective tests are difficult and expensive to construct.**

**Consider the above points as representing an attempt to cover a very complex topic in a very brief manner. With time and research I could write a much fuller account of issues involved in Assessment in Higher Education**