CHAPTER 4

ASSESSMENT AT OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

In this chapter we will look at the various aspects related to assessment procedures at OUM, and examine the tutor’s responsibilities with regards to testing, marking and recording of marks. The important thing to remember about assessment for OUM undergraduates is that both formative and summative forms of assessment are carried out for each course. Formative assessment takes place during the course of the semester and is often referred to as ‘coursework.’ Summative assessment takes place at the end of each semester and is often referred to as the ‘final examination.’ The outcome of all assessment procedures are recorded in the Online Marks Entry System (OMES), a system all tutors have to be familiar with for efficient recording of marks for tests, assignments and the final examination.

OBJECTIVES

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- administer tests and assignments for OUM students;
- assess learner participation in the online Forum;
- and
- use OMES to enter marks for all students.

4.1 ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

As shown in Figure 4.1 below, formative assessment in undergraduate courses constitutes 50% of the grade for a
course while the other 50% comes from summative assessment. During the semester, tutors administer Test 1 (10%) and Test 2 (15%), as well as supervise the conduct of the assignment (20%). Additionally, for all courses, participation in the online forum (5%) is also monitored and graded by the class tutor, be it unstructured or structured activity requiring discussion, collaboration and/or peer interaction.

This structure differs slightly for courses in Science and Engineering which carry a practical or a laboratory (lab) component, as lab reports based on experiments are also assessed. As shown in Figure 4.2, for courses with a practical component, the assignment carries 15% of the grade while each of the other three components of coursework – Test 1, Test 2 and the Lab Report – contributes 10% toward the final grade (i.e. 30% in total). The remaining 5% comes from the student’s participation in the online forum for the course.

The various sample tests, assignments, examination questions and marking schemes for a course are generally prepared by the Subject Matter Expert (SME) for that particular course. As a tutor, you are encouraged to be in constant contact with this individual so that all queries about or suggestions for a course may be consolidated at one point.

Another important point to be raised here is the relationship between the two Tests and the Final Examination. Typically, Test 1 has the same structure as Section A of the Final Examination, while Test 2 has the same structure as Section B of the Final Examination of the same course. However, it may be useful to clarify this with the SME of your subject before the final tutorial of the course so that you will be able to advise your students accordingly.
Figure 4.1: General Assessment Structure for Undergraduate Courses
4.1.1 The First Test

The first test (Test 1) is usually based on the first unit (or the first third) of the print module, and is administered during Tutorial 2 of the semester. Typically, Test 1 consists of 20 multiple choice questions OR 5-10 questions requiring short, sentence-length answers. Students are required to answer all questions given in Test 1 in about half an hour.

Several basic procedures have to be followed for the efficient conduct of this Test. As a tutor you will first access the Sample Paper and Marking Scheme for Test 1 from myLMS and examine its contents. Subsequently you are required to adapt this Sample Paper for your own
class, meaning that you will use the Sample to write a SEPARATE parallel Test for the students in EACH of the tutorial groups you teach. Needless to say, you will also have to create a new marking scheme based on the adapted version of the Test. This procedure helps tutors customise a test according to course content discussed during Tutorials 1 and 2 as well as provides latitude in terms of the viability of test items for a particular class.

4.1.2 The Second Test

The second test is usually based on the second unit (or Chapter 4 - 6) of the print module, and is administered during Tutorial 4 of the 5-tutorial semester. During the short semester (May-August), this Test is given during Tutorial 3. To provide variation in testing formats, Test 2 often contains two subjective questions requiring answers that are one or two pages in length. Students are required to answer one out of the two questions that are given, and questions may require explanation, application, evaluation, critique and/or discussion of the various topics of the print module.

As with Test 1, you will first access the Sample Paper and the related Marking Scheme from myLMS before you prepare Test 2 for your own class. Again, you ought to adapt this Sample Paper for each tutorial group, paying heed to the specific skills that are tested in the Sample. It is important to remember that because Test 2 is conducted during the latter half—or last Tutorial — of the semester (T4 for long semesters or T3 for the short semester) students may experience some anxiety due to their desire to optimise their time with you on that day. Careful planning and time management for the administration of Test 2 as well as for tutoring is therefore called for in this situation.
4.1.3 The Assignment

For each course, a document containing the Assignment and the respective Marking Scheme is uploaded in myLMS at the beginning of the semester. The Assignment is available to all students and tutors, who may access it and print it. It is important to realise that the Assignment is the same for all students in a course, irrespective of where their learning centre is. Tutors may not adapt or change the form or content of an Assignment or the marking scheme provided.

Assignments are based on some critical content in the print module and often require intensive study of more than one chapter or topic. Students may also be required to seek information from other learning resources such as the Digital Library, the internet, field work and scholarly reports based on empirical research. For these reasons, the assignment requires critical reflection, analysis and understanding of one or more areas of knowledge related to the course. Students are encouraged to work with each other, and with the tutor, as part of the learning process and to gain in-depth understanding of course content.

Towards the end of the semester, that is, during T4 for long semesters or T3 for the short semester, each individual student has to submit a hard copy of the outcome of their assignment. This may be in the form of a report, an essay, a portfolio of experiences or a multi-media product. Often, details pertaining to the form or number of pages, diagrams and appendages may be found in the assignment guide or marking scheme which is provided by the SME and is uploaded in myLMS. As indicated in Chapter 2, it is your responsibility as a tutor to communicate these details to your students and to see that they understand the specific requirements of the assignment.

A document called the Tutor Marked Assignment Form (TMA Form) is used to record marks and to provide
feedback to learners. The TMA is filled in part by learners and has to accompany the hardcopy of the assignment upon submission of the hard copy of the assignment paper. The rest of the TMA is filled by the tutor after the hard copy of the assignment has been marked. As shown in Appendix XX, the latter half of the TMA Form requires the tutor to give constructive feedback to students. For this purpose, you would have to read the assignments with a view to (a) provide helpful comments for learners to get feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their assignment papers, and (b) to communicate to students about whether or not they have understood and applied course content well.

In short, feedback given in the TMA Form ought to assist the learner in applying course content s/he has learnt and in overcoming shortcomings in her/his performance. Brief comments like “Good” and “Incomplete” may not be of much use to a learner. On the other hand, comments such as the following will be helpful for future work on the subject.

You have done Part 1 extremely well. You have explained the concept of thermodynamics in detail and given relevant examples. However, the application part of your assignment is incomplete. As I explained in class, you should conduct the experiment, report your observations and draw conclusions about conservation of energy.

The assignment has to be marked and submitted to the Administrator within a specified time line. Sometimes the grace period for handing in marked assignments is extended owing to large classes or logistics, but it is the intention of all OUM Administrators to provide feedback to learners as soon as possible, preferably ahead of the final examination for the course. Thus the student copy of the TMA is sent to students by the Administrator as soon as it has been received.
4.1.4 The Lab Report

For selected courses which have a practical component, science or engineering students are required to carry out experiments and submit laboratory (lab) reports. A lab report is aimed at providing an understanding of scientific phenomena through detailed experiments. Each OUM student has to submit a number of lab reports based on practical exercises in a designated science laboratory. In total, these lab reports carry 10% of the formative assessment marks for a particular course in a programme.

Most lab reports contain details of the following: aim of the experiment, materials used, procedures followed, data and calculations used, as well as analysis, results discussion and conclusion. An appropriate task and its respective marking scheme are used to calibrate a learner’s performance in this requirement. It must be noted that in most cases, a lab coordinator at the host institution is appointed by OUM to supervise and assess students’ performance in the science practical.

It must be pointed out that tutors are generally not responsible for the conduct of a lab report. However, in most cases tutors are required to collect all lab reports from their class during the final tutorial session and hand them over to the administration at the Learning Centre.

4.1.5 Participation in the Online Forum
As part of the OUM experience, students are required to contribute to the online forum for each course they take. This means that students use the forum to interact with you, their tutor and with their peers.

As described in Chapter 3, the focus of online interaction is explication of course content, and the forum is often used as a learning tool: learners discuss various topics, respond to each others’ queries as well as ask questions about things they do not understand. As always, the focus of assessment of contributions in the online forum is the **quality** and, to a lesser extent, the quantity of individual participation. Tutors may use the following matrix in awarding marks for online contributions in the Forum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| High             | (i) High quality contributions focused on task; strong evidence of learner having generated discussion, analysed information, drawn conclusions and helped create a lively debate  
(ii) Contributions have been regular and varied without long lapses between postings | 5      |
| Moderate         | (iii) Contributions have been focused on the task; some evidence of analysis, sharing and teamwork  
(iv) Learner has been present online but postings have been few and far between  
(v) Contributions have been focused on the task; little or no evidence of analysis, sharing and teamwork  
(vi) Student has not been an active contributor | 4      |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 3      |
4.1.6 The Final Examination

The final examination is held in strict examination conditions at specified OUM Learning Centres. Most tutors are not involved in its administration, although a number of tutors are identified to mark the final examination scripts. Procedures for collecting scripts, marking schemes and deadlines for the submission of marks are provided in detail by OUM’s examination division.

The final examination usually follows the following format:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>Twenty (20) multiple-choice questions or 10 questions requiring sentence-length answers, all of which must be answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>Five (5) essay-type questions of which only three must be answered by each candidate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, the final examination for a course lasts two hours, unless otherwise stated by the SME. Tutors often discuss topics for the final examination during the latter half of the semester, and the online discussion forum may also be used to deliberate on effective study skills and strategies for this part of the assessment.

4.2 USING THE ONLINE MARKS ENTRY SYSTEM

All OUM tutors and examiners have to use a web-based system called the Online Marks Entry System or OMES to enter and verify coursework marks. This is applicable to marks for tests, assignments and online contributions to the Forum in myLMS as well as marks for the final examination. It is important to remember that in OMES, a tutor or examiner has complete ownership of all his/her marks and that only a tutor is allowed to re-enter or change marks for his/her students. It is therefore crucial for all tutors to enter marks for a course accurately and to
ensure that the right students for a tutorial group are selected from the OUM database. After a tutor has entered marks into the OUM database, the respective PPU Administrator will verify that the marks for a tutorial group have been entered accurately.

For all of the above reasons, the tasks performed by a tutor differ from those carried out by an administrator, as outlined below.

(i) Tasks to be carried out by a Tutor in OMES

(a) Ensure all students in a tutorial class are selected;
(b) Enter marks for students;
(c) Check all marks for accuracy; and
(d) Submit an original hardcopy of marks to the Administrator.

(ii) Tasks carried out by an Administrator in OMES

(a) Check all marks entered into OMES against the original hardcopy supplied by tutor;
(b) Correct mistakes or enter missing marks; and
(c) Click the “verified” button to indicate that all entries are correct. At this point all marks will be locked and no one—not even a tutor—can use OMES to change the marks.

The link to OMES is located on the OUM homepage under the quick-links section. To access OMES, do the following:
Tutors can carry out three main functions in OMES: Change Password, Student Selection and Enter Coursework Marks. As presented in Figure 4.3, these three functions of OMES follow a precise and orderly work flow. The process of entering and verifying marks for each of these functions is described in the following sections.
Figure 4.3: The OMES work flow

* After the SUBMIT MARKS button has been clicked wait until the message UPDATE SUCCESSFUL is displayed. This confirms that the marks have been entered into the database. Poor connection may result in delay in transferring data from tutor's PC to the database. Shutting off a browser before the message UPDATE SUCCESSFUL is displayed may result in loss of data.

** You may wish to print this page for future reference.
Figure 4.3: OMES screen

Once you have accessed this page, you can log in to OMES. This facility may be used by all tutors, examiners and administrators. You have to click the appropriate button on the screen (Figure 4.3) before using one of the three functions of OMES.

4.2.1 Function 1: CHANGE PASSWORD

For FIRST TIME LOGIN, a tutor has to use his or her I.C. number (no dashes or spaces) for both user ID and password. Using the screen in Figure 4.4, key-in your User ID and password. After pressing Enter, the screen in Figure 4.5 will appear.
At this point you have to change your password. Using Figure 4.5, key in your new password. To change your password, do the following:

(i) type the old password, which is your I. C. number;
(ii) enter the new password;
(iii) confirm the new password; and
(iv) click the Change Password button.
It is important not to forget your new password as it will be used to enter all marks for your course. Only you should have knowledge of your new password, and marks for students should be treated in the strictest confidence. However, the User ID will remain as your twelve digit I.C. number. At OUM, OMES is a distinct networked facility and your password for OMES can be different from the password used for the Forum in myLMS.

Having changed your password, the screen in Figure 4.6 will appear. You may now proceed to student selection for your course.

4.2.2 Function 2: SELECT YOUR STUDENTS

In OMES, students are grouped according to the subjects or courses that they are registered for. To enter your students' marks, you will have to first SELECT the students from your tutorial group. If you have more than one tutorial group at the same Learning Centre, each group has to be selected separately. These groups will then be labelled as Section 1, Section 2 and so on.
To select students, do the following:

(i) from the screen in Figure 4.6, click on **Student Selection**;
(ii) use the pull-down menu to select your Learning Centre (See Figure 4.7);
(iii) select the appropriate Subject or Course Code;
(iv) click the **Save PFU & Course ID** button to save this setup information; and
(v) click on the **Select Student** to select all the students in your tutorial group.
Figure 4.7: Learning centres options

Figure 4.8 will now appear. Select each student by clicking on the name and by clicking the Add button. Once the Add button is clicked, the selected name is highlighted in orange. A wrong selection of students may be deleted by clicking the Delete box at the bottom of the screen (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: List of students based on learning centre
The names of the students that you have selected will be highlighted in a coloured band (Figure 4.9). Once a student has been selected by one tutor, he/she cannot be selected by another tutor. For this reason we must be careful to select students from our own tutorial groups only.

You can also move out of OMES by clicking on MAIN MENU or LOGOUT on the top right hand corner of the screen (see Figure 4.9). Whenever this band is displayed the Back button on the browser cannot be used.

![Figure 4.9: Selected students](image)

Note that once a student has been selected by a tutor, no other tutor can view this student’s name or marks. If a student changes tutor after he or she has been selected, he/she has to inform the administrator, who will then make the necessary changes. If a student changes his/her group without the approval of the administrator, he/she will not be in the new or the old tutor’s name list, and will therefore not be given any marks.
4.2.3 Function 3: ENTERING COURSEWORK MARKS

It is important to remember that marks from tests and assignment have to be converted to the right proportion. For this reason, the following percentages may be used as a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Marks Entry for Coursework (General Structure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Marks Entry for Coursework (For Courses with a Practical Component)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Report(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the tutor has any doubts about the proportion, please contact the relevant faculty. If marks exceed the above percentages for each requirement, the system will reject them. See the following examples for an explanation on how these percentages may be used for entering coursework marks.

**Example 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test 1 (10%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Marks:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Score:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion to 10%:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marks to be entered in OMES : 8.5
Example 2

Test 2 (15%)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Marks:</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Score:</td>
<td>32/50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion to 15%:</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marks to be entered in OMES: 9.6

Example 3

Assignment (20%)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Marks:</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Score:</td>
<td>63/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion to 20%:</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marks to be entered in OMES: 12.6

To enter marks for each Course requirement, do the following:

(i) from the Main Menu (Figure 4.6) select Enter Coursework Marks;
(ii) view the set up screen as in Figure 4.10;
(iii) select the Learning Centre;
(iv) select Subject or Course; and
(v) select your tutorial group.

Figure 4.10: Tutor marks entry listing screen
Once these steps have been performed, the screen in Figure 4.10 will be displayed. You can now proceed to enter marks for an appropriate course requirement, i.e. Test 1, Test 2, Assignment, or Online Participation.

![Figure 4.10](image)

**Figure 4.10**

Remember that marks can be entered in stages or all at once (Figure 4.11). However, tutors should always save the entered marks regularly to pre-empt electrical and/or electronic disruptions. To save marks in the OUM database, click the **Submit Marks** button. This may take a little time as the marks are communicated through the Internet. Once the marks are submitted, the following message will appear.

![Figure 4.11: Marks entering form](image)

**Figure 4.11: Marks entering form**

Remember that this message must be communicated to you before you shut down the browser. Further entries
or corrections to marks entered can be made at any time during the semester. Each new submission will overwrite a previous submission. A tutor should always check with the Administrator to ensure that marks are entered before the submission deadline.

At this point a printed version of the student’s name and marks can be kept for your personal records.

4.2.4 Verifying Marks

To ensure that all marks are entered correctly, and that missing marks are accounted for, tutors are obliged to do the following:

(i) provide the Administrator with a handwritten marks sheet. This is not the same as a print-out from OMES. (Note that the handwritten marks are usually part of a package; other items include the TMA and students’ marked assignments);

(ii) provide a written explanation of marks that are missing, e.g., give a list of names of students who have missed a test or students whose assignments have not been handed in; and

(iii) if possible, get the administrator to verify the marks in your presence.

Once marks are verified by the Administrator, they cannot be changed, not even by the tutor. If any changes have to be made, the OUM examination unit should be contacted.

4.2.5 Password Retrieval

The problem of tutors forgetting their OMES password keeps cropping up every semester. To help tutors who may be in this predicament, a new feature has been added to OMES.
The Login screen will have a small link titled “Forgotten your password?” Clicking on this link will open up a screen asking the following:

Please enter your IC no (12 digits without spaces or dashes)
Please enter your mother’s name
Please enter your favourite colour

If the entries are correct, an email will be sent to the tutor with new login instructions. The email will be sent automatically by the system and this may take several minutes to reach the tutor’s inbox.

The change password screen forces the tutor to enter the two items required, namely:

Please enter your mother’s name
Please enter your favourite colour

To proceed beyond this screen, this information must be entered by the user.

4.3 SUMMARY

In this chapter, you have learnt about assessment procedures as well as a crucial online tool called OMES. The focus here has been on assisting you in carrying out key functions related to assessing and recording marks in the OUM database. As a tutor, you should access OMES and practice using it early in the semester so that you are familiar with the system by the time the semester ends. OUM works on a very tight schedule, so timeliness in all of these processes is crucial.