GaIA-2: Anglia Ruskin’s tool supporting ‘good and inclusive assessment’

Introduction and context

Welcome to GaIA – a tool to support ‘Good and Inclusive Assessment’. It is a central element of Anglia Ruskin’s approach to an inclusive curriculum under our Inclusive Curriculum Framework. GaIA was conceived in 2017 as an approach to inclusive assessment based on the premise that good assessment practice will support inclusion by:

- Improving assessment literacy
- Removing practical and cultural barriers to student success
- Making assessment an authentic part of learning
- Improving feedback and marking practice.

This approach does not automatically provide complete parity of experience for every single learner, but goes a very long way towards doing so. Those learners with specific needs will continue to be supported by targeted interventions through the SoRA (Statement of Reasonable Adjustment) process, but all learners should otherwise have equal opportunity to achieve their potential through a ‘level playing field’ in assessment.

Whilst the original focus of inclusive practice was on students with disabilities, this has broadened over the last few years. Universities across the UK have recognized that some groups of students obtain lower degree classifications on average than their peers. With this has come a realisation that the assessment process has to work for all students and should not depend on prior knowledge or experience. In recent years, ARU has paid increasing attention to ‘disadvantage gaps’ as part of its access and participation planning, and has engaged with research through TSEP (The Student Engagement Partnership) and Advance HE.

In parallel to the increased focus on inclusive practice, ARU undertook a major enhancement programme on assessment and feedback, ‘Making our Mark’. The strategy for inclusive

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assessment practice is a logical merger of this with our inclusive principles. This guide offers a simple checklist to help individuals and course teams evaluate their assessment practice. This version of GaIA is a successor to an earlier guide and contains a series of prompt questions in five areas. These are covered in significantly more detail on the AL&T Assessment and Feedback Canvas support site, which includes prompt cards for use in curriculum design. Reference to the corresponding areas of the site are made at the end of each section of this guide.

Inclusive assessment principles

Our approach to inclusive assessment is based on providing equality of opportunity for all learners, allowing them to demonstrate how they meet learning outcomes through assessment. To achieve this, no aspect of the assessment process should disadvantage any student, unless this disadvantage is identified and can be addressed by a specific intervention where necessary. The key elements of inclusive assessment are:

- A **course-based assessment strategy** that provides students with a coherent picture of their learning journey
- Comprehensive support for **assessment literacy**, so that assessment becomes part of students’ learning
- An approach to the **design of individual assessment tasks** that is aligned with learning outcomes
- A **variety of forms of assessment** that provide opportunities for different individuals
- Opportunities for students to become acquainted with forms of assessment in **low-stakes settings**
- Clear and unambiguous **descriptions of assessment tasks** that indicate how the task should be undertaken
- Availability of exemplars and other forms of ‘**feed forward**’
- Clear **marking schemes** that relate to learning outcomes and indicate the weighting of different elements
- Delivery of **feedback** in a form, and at a time, where it can be used by students for enhanced future attainment.

We are aware that there are occasions where alternative forms of assessment need to be provided to meet the needs of some learners. Whilst GaIA acknowledges that this is the case, it does not explicitly recommend how this can be done. Considerations in the design of alternative

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2 https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499
assessment tasks, or the change to a more inclusive task for all learners, should follow the criteria here.

**Assessment Strategy**

When planning a student's assessment experience, it is important that we consider the assessment and feedback 'mix' across the whole course. This is often challenging given the silo nature of the modular system. Therefore, good course design requires a strategic course-level approach.

**Things to consider when designing your assessment strategy:**

- Is there an **integrated approach** to assessment across the entire course?
- Is there a **progression in assessment** that embodies the different levels of study, making use of low- and high-stakes tasks?
- Do the planned tasks provide a **variety of forms of assessment** that also reflect course-level outcomes and professional practice?
- Does the **course assessment map** demonstrate that over-assessment is avoided and that workloads for both students and staff are realistic?

More resources are on our Assessment and Feedback Canvas site at: https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/assessment-strategy

**Assessment Literacy**

Assessment literacy underpins how we all engage with the assessment process. It enables **students** to progress in their learning more purposefully and effectively. Crucial for **academic staff**, assessment literacy enables the design of aligned, high-quality and authentic assessments.

**Things to consider when building assessment literacy into the curriculum:**

- How will assessment tasks demonstrate **alignment with learning outcomes**, in a way that is meaningful to students?
- How will assessment tasks **build on previous student experience**, including both formative and summative tasks, to develop assessment as part of their learning rather than just an attainment metric?
- How will assessment tasks be supported by materials such as exemplars and links to academic
skills and literacies that provide guidance for successful submission?

▪ How can students become involved in aspects of assessment design, such as contributing to marking schemes or using these in self- or peer-assessment?

▪ How will students be supported in their understanding and use of feedback?

More resources are on our Assessment and Feedback Canvas site at: https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/assessment-literacy

Assessment Design

Good assessment design should make the experience inspiring and motivating for both students and staff. It should create a positive climate that encourages interaction and dialogue.

Things to consider when using Universal Design Principles in assessment:

▪ How do summative assessment tasks allow students to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes in the context of the course and at the appropriate level?

▪ How is assessment made to be engaging and authentic?

▪ How will assessment descriptions (assessment briefs) be presented to students in a consistent manner that provides clear and unambiguous information?

▪ How are methods of assessment used to minimise disadvantage to some students, or if this is not practicable can an alternative* be provided?

▪ How is assessment design used to minimise plagiarism and other academic malpractice?

*If you need to provide an alternative assessment format, this must allow learners the same opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.

More resources are on our Assessment and Feedback Canvas site at: https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/assessment-design

Marking

As an institution, we are expected to have effective and clearly articulated processes for the marking and moderation of assessments. Students should feel that the marking process is fair both in terms of consistency and lacks inadvertent discrimination. If you need to provide an alternative assessment format, you should ensure that there is parity in marking between the two formats.
**Things to consider when designing a robust marking process as part of the curriculum:**

- How will students engage with marking criteria as part of their **preparation** for assessment tasks?
- How will marking criteria **relate to learning outcomes** for the assessment task, and how are these reflected in the weighting for each criterion?
- How will **marking load on staff** be minimised in order to ensure that students receive good quality and fair assessment?
- What consideration has been given to the **use of technology** to provide assessments that are marked automatically for both formative and summative tasks?

More resources are on our Assessment and Feedback Canvas site at: [https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/marking](https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/marking)

**Feedback**

Feedback is most useful when students have space and time, and a reason, to use it in future work. Therefore, it is more important to provide timely feedback that aligns with the Intended Learning Outcomesformatively, rather than summatively.

**Things to consider when designing good feedback practice into the curriculum:**

- How does feedback **reflect marking criteria and learning outcomes**?
- How will feedback be structured to maximise its **value for future assessment tasks**?
- What forms of **feed-forward** will be employed on the course?
- How will a **feedback dialogue** between students and staff be encouraged and sustained?

More resources are on our Assessment and Feedback Canvas site at: [https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/feedback](https://canvas.anglia.ac.uk/courses/1499/pages/feedback)