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From traditional essay to 'Ready Steady Cook' presentation: Reasons for innovative changes in Higher Education assignments

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Abstract

The prose essay, case study, laboratory report and book review, composed by individual students in isolation from their peers, used to be the mainstay of undergraduate writing. However, in recent years an array of alternative assignment types such as blogs, letters and e-posters have widened the repertoire of texts expected. This paper attempts to describe the reasoning behind changes in assignments types at undergraduate level at the beginning of the twenty first century. Data from 58 semi-structured interviews with lecturers in three U.K. universities is used together with follow-on emails and course handbooks. Suggested reasons for new assignment types are grouped under three headings: external pressure, lecturer-driven and student-driven. The paper surmises that due to these pressures students are expected to produce a wide variety of text types and greater attention should be paid to guidance in academic writing for both native and non-native speaker students.

Key Words: assignment, assessment, Higher Education, university, coursework, innovative, essay,

Introduction

Following recommendations from the 1997 Dearing committee report into Higher Education in the U.K., the last ten years has seen a rapid expansion in student numbers and year-on-year increases in tuition fees. Over the same time period there has also been an increase in the numbers of non-traditional students, non-native speakers and part-time students. Among full-time students, it has been suggested that up to three-quarters undertake paid work during term time and consequently reduce the time they spend on study (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004:13). These changes result in a less homogenous student body, with a greater diversity of work, life and cultural experience to bring to learning.

At the same time, the nature of university study has altered with increased opportunities for students to take courses from several disciplines, a phenomenon described by North as 'related to the drive to expand participation in U.K. higher education' (2005:518). Greater use of e-learning, widespread modularisation and Quality Assurance Agency requirements for clear learning outcomes are also changing the face of learning and assessment.

Students have a growing range of assessment types and 'an unprecedented amount of innovation in assessment' (Gibbs, 2006a:20) to contend with during their undergraduate studies and must quickly learn what is required from each of these (see list in appendix two). In this paper all assignment labels are those given by tutors themselves and all lecturers' comments are ascribed to the related discipline rather than any individual within a particular university.

This paper outlines interview data taken from the British Academic Written English project. The nature of the traditional essay as an assessment form is outlined along with examples of some new assignment types. Possible reasons behind the drive to innovate in coursework assessment are grouped into three categories: external factors, lecturer-driven factors and student-driven ones. Finally, the effect of innovative assignments on marking is considered and some recommendations for extra student support are offered.

The Bawe Project Interviews

The British Academic Written English project is an ESRC-funded project which is collecting 3000 student assignments from a variety of disciplines in four U.K. universities between 2004 and 2007. The main aim of the project is to compile an electronic collection of texts (the Bawe corpus) in order to explore the characteristics of proficient student writing and to study genre variations across disciplines (see Nesi et. al., 2005 for a fuller description). In addition to the corpus compilation, a total of 58 interviews with lecturing staff across a range of disciplines were conducted in three of these universities, Oxford Brookes, Reading and Warwick, during 2005 and 2006 (the fourth university involved in the project is Coventry). Interviews were semi-structured and covered topics such as the types of assignment set, the role of written assignments in the department, and the aspects of student writing which are most valued by tutors (see appendix one for numbers of interviews across the disciplines).

Nesi and Gardner (2006) discuss these interviews in terms of disciplinary variations in tutors' views on assessed writing. They consider the different assignment types in terms of 'pedagogic genres' (e.g. the traditional essay, problem sheets), 'research-academic genres' (e.g. research reports which emulate the style of published articles) and 'professional genres' (e.g. case notes in Law). As Nesi and Gardner point out, a recurring theme in the tutor interviews is the apologetic view of the traditional essay and the consequent drive towards innovative assignment types; this will be explored further in the next section.

The Traditional Essay and the drive to innovate

The essay has for a long time been seen in academia as the 'default genre' of writing (Andrews, 2003), with alternative assignment forms being used 'to meet special requirements, or as a result of inventiveness on the part of the tutor or student' (Womack, 1993:42). Without such prerequisites, Womack argues, 'everyone returns, as if by a common homing instinct, to setting, writing and marking essays' (p.42). The Bawe interviews showed that many text types are often subsumed under the generic heading of 'essay', such that for some lecturers and students it becomes almost synonymous with 'assignment'. Essays were listed by lecturers as an assignment method on one or more courses in all twenty disciplines covered by the Bawe project interviews, with the recent exception of Physics where the sole essay was regarded as 'something of a misnomer' and replaced by an experimental report in the 2005-6 academic year (see appendix two).

The essay was described by one lecturer as falling 'within a British tradition of how we teach and learn'; the student 'can't waffle' in an essay since it shows whether students 'can think deeply about a subject' and reveals the extent of their reading (Anthropology). These views echo those of Henderson who describes the essay as 'an exercise in communication' which should show that the student 'has penetrated towards the heart of an issue' (1980:199). However, aside from academics and the rare professional essayist, few graduates will ever need to produce an academic essay and as such it remains firmly within Nesi and Gardner's pedagogic category of assignments (2006).

While it is seen as a stalwart within the pedagogic genre, several lecturers felt the need to justify their reliance on 'standard' essays in twenty-first century university study and the following comment was echoed by others: 'we're quite a traditional dept in that we still use mainly essays' (Sociology). A corresponding desire to innovate in assignment-setting was a common feeling:

'History tends to stick pretty much to …assessed essays….I think we could experiment more' (History)

'It has been the convention to use essays. I would like to break away from that.' (Psychology).

Essays don't encourage students to do 'more interesting' pieces of work. (Computing).

Other lecturers emphasized their move away from the standard:

'Overall we've tried to move slightly away from standardised assessment and towards more innovative forms of engaging students'. (English)

Indeed, innovation in teaching and assessment are flagged as a selling point in the online guide to Publishing courses which asserts: 'we make significant use of innovative teaching methods such as role play, group work, problem solving and assessed presentations'. The next section gives some examples of innovation in coursework assessment.

Examples of Innovative assignments

What qualifies as 'innovation' is highly subjective and this paper uses the lecturers' descriptions in considering new assignments. In their description of recent assignments listed in the Bawe interview data, Nesi and Gardner (2006) divide innovative assignment trends into four areas: 'creative writing', 'empathy writing', 'reflective writing', and 'new technologies'.

The first of these, creative writing, is not in itself a new format, however its use within Sociology is interesting; a new assignment in a Crime and Deviance module in 2005-6 requiring students to write a chapter of a crime novel, thus expanding the assessment genres into 'social science fiction'. Empathy writing (Lea and Street, 2000:39) asks students to communicate with people outside their discipline area; for example in Physics, students are asked to write a fact sheet to explain a physical phenomenon to GCSE students. Reflective writing can involve the use of weblogs in Engineering or self reflections on practical work in Healthcare. The category of new technologies is the most accepted as 'innovative' since many of these assignments have arisen recently due to the widespread availability of software. In Medicine and in Theatre Studies, students may choose to evaluate a website while in Publishing they are asked to design their own site. A fuller list of the assignment types mentioned by Bawe interviewees is given in appendix two and those types described as 'new' or 'innovative' are asterisked.

Three types of pressure

This section considers lecturers' motivation behind the development of innovative assignment types in an attempt to account for the recent increase in novel ways of assessing students. These reasons are considered in terms of three pressures: external pushes for change such as those imposed on courses by government or the individual educational institution, lecturer-driven influences and student-driven influences.

External factors

- **Greater student numbers**

Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that student numbers in U.K. universities have increased by 30% over the last ten years. This growth has put huge pressure on lecturers' time in terms of

assessment feedback as there has not been a corresponding increase in staffing (Gibbs, 2006a). While no interviewees cited the increase in students as a reason for moves to more peer-assessed work, groupwork and oral presentations, it seems reasonable to include this as a factor.

- ## **Semesterisation, Validation and Modularisation**

Many lecturers cited the change from terms to semesters and the consequent requirement for course validation as impetus for an overhaul in assessment methods. Course changes from three x ten weeks to two x thirteen weeks and changes to reading and exam weeks results in a loss of teaching time and the need to reduce course input; it may also hasten changes to assessment that are already in the pipeline. In one English Literature course, revalidation over a three year period was described as resulting in 'much more in the way of presentations, the construction of critical anthologies, seminar diaries and staggered coursework' and replacing 'standard essays and / or exams' (English). In the same way, revalidation and the consequent overhaul of assignments in Publishing resulted in an increase in the number of real world tasks such as letters to publishing companies.

Hand in hand with semesterisation is the change from courses to credit-based modules. This move to smaller study units means that summative assessment has to occur more frequently with little time for feedback (Gibbs, 2006a), and again forces a change in assessment methods.

- ## **Focus on transferable skills**

Henderson asserts that 'a major purpose of education is to prepare individuals to interact with others in the realm of ideas' (1980:197-8). Almost two decades later there has been a shift towards learning as skills procurement for the workplace. The Dearing report lists the four key skills in Higher Education as communication, numeracy, the use of Information Technology and learning how to learn (1997).

Degree programmes now explicitly list the learning outcomes of particular modules under headings such as: 'knowledge and understanding', 'disciplinary/ professional skills' and 'transferable skills', the latter being particularly concerned with students' future study and vocational needs. As an example, the handbook for an English Literature module gives the following transferable skills which will be taught, practised and assessed during the course:-

'On completion of the module the student will have developed her/his ability to:
- communicate ideas and arguments cogently in written and spoken form.
- produce written work in line with accepted academic protocol.
- work independently.
- engage in group discussion.
- use a broad range of text and web-based resources in research.
- be receptive to new or challenging ideas.
- think critically and expansively about a wide range of issues.
- learn from feedback in order to improve performance.'

Changes in assignments in English were described as allowing more flexibility for staff 'to assess skills that cannot be examined by other forms' (English). One such skill is group cooperation, described below.

- **Transferable skills: Teamwork and group evaluation**

Groupwork is frequently used within the 'emergent disciplines' (Baynham, 2000), for example in Publishing a group of students role played the part of a management team and decide whether to publish or reject a manuscript. One handbook for Masters' courses in Hotel, Leisure and Tourism Management (Hltm) sees groupwork as providing 'the opportunity to develop important self-management, communication and team-working skills' and also 'an opportunity for overseas students to practise speaking in English'; the latter is a highly relevant point as around 95% of students on this course are international. Interestingly, while Hltm and Publishing are often described as emergent disciplines, these particular departments have existed for fifty years and over forty years respectively.

While clearly applicable to vocational areas where jobs entail functioning in a team, this focus on groupwork and also the provision of audience and purpose appears widespread in current University assessment. In Law, a mock trial involves students cross-examining each other and interviewing 'clients'. In Computing, technical writing is often done as groupwork; a typical group comprises four students who meet several times and produce a piece of technical writing and a report on the experience of working in a team. A Sociology module includes students evaluating each other's written stories, then deciding on the best ones.

In an Anthropology Master's course, groups of students are required to give a presentation which is assessed. Students can 'opt to do a poster or standard oral presentation… or a role play, edited video, puppet show – whatever'. This freedom in the mode of presentation often results in students choosing 'innovative approach(es)' such as one group performing a take-off of the television cookery programme 'Ready Steady Cook' (Anthropology lecturer).

- **Electronic resources.**

One clear area of externally brought about change is the increase in electronic resources. This has been well-documented by Weigle who argues that 'technology is changing the way we think about writing and how we do it' (2002:231; also see Lea, 2001). Powerpoint, blogs, wikis, e-posters and various mobile learning devices are also extending the range of ways in which students can learn and be assessed. For example in History, rather than write an essay on a given title, students are asked to identify a historical problem, enter information into a database and conduct a statistical analysis; the ensuing writing reports on the construction and use of this database.

Electronic resources often necessitate greater cooperation between students. Commenting on others' draft writing on a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and reading and responding to a peer's weblog are examples of writing negotiated as a pair or group rather than as a social activity. In Health and Social Care a new assignment in 2005-06 consists of a group reflective essay resulting from a VLE discussion, mirroring the ethos in the health professions that 'we work with people' and rarely deal with a client alone (Health).

Lecturer-driven factors

- **Response to students' feedback**

The changes in the composition of the student body and the payment of fees for higher education has undoubtedly affected students' expectations of their institutions, courses and tutors. Students are now consumers with choice (Taylor, 2002), and lecturers are expected to request and take account of end-of-

course feedback. For example in Anthropology, an e-learning test of key words was abandoned after one term when students said in course feedback that it was not helpful.

• Avoidance of plagiarism

Although not in the interview questions, many lecturers initiated discussion of this topic with several describing how the 'enormous plagiarism problem' influenced their choice of assessment method. In Law, setting hypothetical, unique legal problems is seen as a move towards preventing plagiarism. Similarly in Biology, mock grant applications have no standard answers. For Engineering, case studies are viewed as less susceptible to 'bog-standard plagiarism' than are other kinds of task.

In Healthcare a lecturer described how he devised a new assignment to assess students' understanding of type 1 diabetes after finding that in the original descriptive essay students simply 'cribbed from course notes'. The new version is an essay based on a case study which 'forces students to consider a broad range of learning outcomes' and necessitates looking at different sources such as textbooks and journals (Health).

These changes in assignment types are in line with Knight's suggestions for combating plagiarism with frequent changes of course task and setting class-specific tasks (2001). In addition to these methods, he argues for time-constrained coursework and greater use of formative assessment; however, the latter requires greater time than lecturers with large classes can give.

• Scaffolding essays

While formative assessment has suffered due to lack of time on the part of both students and lecturers, many staff recognise a need to help students with their writing. A lecturer in Anthropology described how she was 'horrified' by the low standard of exam writing of first year students, and attempted to remedy this by the addition of assessed exercises such as abstract-reading, writing five-paragraph essays and doing library work. Similarly, in first year English Literature, tasks such as portfolios, work sheets, diaries and responses to texts are seen as helping students to move towards full essay writing.

In the same vein, a Psychology lecturer recounted an occasion when he asked students to write a book review then found they did not how to do so. The lecturer assumed that both parties had a similar idea of what a book review entails but found that this task 'sorted a few sheep from the goats'. The task was then broken down and explained in stages so that students were able to complete it.

• Manage marking load

The desire to manage marking workload, particularly important with increases in student numbers, was given as another factor behind change in assignment scheduling. Several shorter assignments were seen as preferable to a single end-of-course one for both lecturers and students (Hltm). While written assessment is a way of ensuring students do give time to their studies, it clearly increases lecturers' workload. Gibbs and Simpson comment that students' 'time and effort can also be captured through social pressure' involved in public displays such as posters and presentations, and through taking part in groupwork (2004:14). Oral assessment is a further way of managing a spiraling marking load and is becoming more prevalent.

- **Exam: coursework balance**

In terms of the balance between coursework and exams, one lecturer viewed the traditional 50 – 50 split as being problematic since 'with only one longer piece of written assignment throughout the year if they don't get things right for the essay, chances are they're going to fail' (English). For her this was a reason to add a smaller piece of work earlier in the year.

Several lecturers expressed dissatisfaction with exams. One anthropology lecturer with 25 years of teaching experience felt that exams were 'not a fair test' and that other forms of assessment were better. In this department there is a policy of different modules having different assessment methods to the extent that students may choose their modules based on whether they prefer exams or coursework. This is backed up by Gibbs and Simpson's discussion of exams as 'very poor predictors of any subsequent performance, such as success at work' whereas coursework is seen to display longer-term and higher-quality learning (2004:7).

- **Innovation as progress**

While the standard essay is largely seen as a benchmark for quality, some lecturers expressed the feeling that they should innovate and push beyond conventional assessment methods as a way of showing change. In English Literature the traditional essay has been replaced on some courses by presentations, the construction of critical anthologies and seminar diaries. In interview, a Sociology lecturer highlighted a newly-introduced form of assessment with 'evolving' criteria for the module, Crime and Deviance. This consists of writing crime fiction and reviewing a crime novel. Other new modules in Sociology include producing screenshots and photos along with writing for a module in Visual Sociology. An Hltm module on Entrepreneurship has a presentation based on the television programme, 'Dragon's Den', giving it a zeitgeist appeal.

- **Combining methods**

Sometimes the methods used may not be particularly innovative but the use of them in combination provides a different perspective, for example giving a powerpoint presentation based on a written report. A 'poster day' in Computing was described as a 'safeguard' for students since if written work is below standard the marks can then be adjusted upwards. In one Engineering Module on the history of British car industry, students in groups of five choose a topic, give a seminar presentation, then after feedback submit a written paper and poster linked to their theme. They each also submit a reflective journal of their experience which may in the future be done as a blog.

- **Awareness of audience**

Many lecturers have incorporated a greater awareness of different audiences into their assignments with students being asked to write for GCSE-level, an 'educated reader' or a specialist. For example in Physics the module 'Communicating Science' asks students to write a factsheet to explain a physical principle to GCSE students. The same module includes persuasive writing on topical issues such as global warming, and writing a journal article for New Scientist.

Unlike the imaginary audiences in the Physics examples, with the advent of blended learning more and more students have the opportunity to 'publish' their work on a VLE and reach an audience greater than their tutor and moderator. Creating an audience from fellow students in the form of presentations, posters and online reading creates 'social pressure' and can be seen as 'capturing' students' time and effort without adding to staff marking (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004:13).

Student-driven factors

A report in 2006 by the independent think tank 'Reform' terms young people the 'IPOD generation – Insecure, Pressured, Over-taxed and Debt-Ridden.' It goes on to say that rising taxes, student debts and pension provision will 'give the average graduate aged 21-35 an effective tax burden of nearly 50 per cent early in the next decade'. Students on average now owe £15000 when they graduate and student debt is up 318% since 2000. These facts alone may account for some changes in the way university students are assessed, since time pressure and debt give them a different outlook on study.

- **Time-poor and marks-driven**

Gibbs and Simpson make the point forcefully that:

> *'[i]t is a common observation of higher education teachers that if coursework is taken away from a module due to resource restraints, students simply do not do the associated studying; for example students will rarely write unassessed essays. It is argued that you have to assess everything that moves in order to capture students' time and energy'* (2004:8).

Similarly, Garde-Hansen and Calvert describe a project which encouraged students to be research-active and found that "these students were so assessment-driven they sought a paint-by-numbers approach to gaining knowledge" (2007:112).

These views are echoed in the Bawe interviews with students frequently described as strategic in planning their time; they are also 'marks driven' and 'wanting a number' rather than feedback (Philosophy).

One Psychology lecturer deplores the pressure of the 'league table mentality' which he blames for the demise of 'risk-free writing' by students. In this atmosphere, several interviewees stated that students' passive non-compliance with formative tasks had led to the abandonment of these as scaffolding for students' later assessed work. One solution was to announce that students would be ineligible to submit marked assignments if they fail to carry out formative ones (Anthropology).

The move towards all assessed assignments is exemplified by a change in one English Literature module. In the 2003-04 student handbook the section on keeping a course journal stated 'this will be your own property; for your eyes only', however by the 2005-06 handbook this line had been removed since the journal was now an assessment option. While no tutor stated this directly, it seems reasonable to infer that few students voluntarily kept a study journal as this was not an assessed part of the course.

- **Applicable to the real world**

Since students have to pay tuition fees, many are concerned with the job they may gain at the end of their course and subsequently assessment is becoming more obviously relevant to graduate-level jobs. In Hltm the course handbook states that the main focus of assessment is on 'preparation for the real world'. Assignments range from reports involving primary research in bookshops, business letters, case studies presented in the form of letters and job application portfolios (C.V., letter, self reflection).

Similarly, in Publishing, efforts are made to match assignments to industry-based situations with an increase in marketing and editorial reports. In contrast to this, work described as an 'essay' may concern the history and culture of publishing. In Heath and Social Care, third years write a personal development statement which includes the acquisition of generic and transferable skills which have applications to later

work. Lecturers found that students were very motivated to do this assignment and recognized the importance of being 'client-centred' (Health).

In Engineering the main role of written assignments is to demonstrate understanding and the ability to apply knowledge, 'ideally for business benefit'. One Engineering lecturer noticed that industrially-based students tended to put more effort into their written assignments.

- **Diverse students**

In a study on factors helping student retention, Glogowska et.al. call for greater recognition of 'the complex lives of many…students, and the pressures faced by them'. They suggest that institutions should 'adapt to accommodate diverse student needs' (2007:75) and describe small groupwork as one way of helping students to informally support each other.

Marking

Since students 'largely study what is assessed, or more accurately, what they perceive the assessment system to require' (Gibbs, 2006a:15), it is essential to adequately capture this study time by having sufficient numbers of assignments which involve the synthesis of ideas. Gibbs explores this area, listing eleven conditions under which assessment supports learning, covering the quantity, quality and distribution of student effort and quantity, quality and timing of feedback (2006b).

Changes in assignment types have been accompanied by alterations in marking. A clear rationale for this is the increasingly public nature of students' work. Whereas essays, case studies and so on may have previously been read by a small audience of the tutor and perhaps a moderator, current assignments such as posters, oral presentations and weblogs potentially cater for a far larger audience.

Assessment has also moved from being the hidden preserve of the lecturer to a more transparent process involving other students. In Anthropology, one lecturer asked students to view and anonymously rank each others' posters, describing the event as similar to a conference poster day. For groupwork, again in Anthropology, each group presents for ten minutes per week on their topic research. At the end of the semester, group members award everyone in their group a mark for how they performed in research and presentations. Students are thus encouraged to take part in the marking process and consider how the marks are allocated. Gibbs (2006b:33) suggests that 'social pressures to deliver…through making the products of learning public (in posters, or through peer assessment) may induce more care and pride in work than 'secretly' submitted assignments to the teacher'.

On occasion, groupwork may result in differing marks among students. In Physics groupwork, students are given the opportunity 'to finger colleagues who have not contributed' to the group effort. In a Computing module, a lecturer redesigned the feedback component of team reports from students' own assessments of their individual contributions to the provision of group meeting minutes. The lecturer in this case noticed that students did not always tell the truth about their own contribution to the group project whereas the minutes show that they failed to attend meetings. Similarly in Hltm all students in the group receive the same mark but if they decide that 'an uneven distribution of marks is appropriate' they can provide the group's minutes to support a change in the marks. During Hltm group meetings, members can vote to give a 'dysfunctional group member' a varying array of penalties, ranging from a white card recorded warning, through green and yellow cards, culminating in a red card after which the student would be given no mark for the assignment.

Discussion

The 'increasing demands on United Kingdom universities brought about by the expanded government agenda and the entry of higher numbers of more diverse students' (Lomas, 2007:243) have all contributed to changes in assessment methods and the introduction of a range of more innovative assignment types. At the same time the increase in the 'commodification of learning' and view of the student as a consumer of learning (Taylor et.al. 2002) has led to a greater focus on the outcomes of university study.

It is perhaps surprising that coursework still holds strong, given the high prevalence of plagiarism and collusion in student work. However, the development of innovative assignment types lessens the opportunities for students to find standard essays from online sites since reflective journals, weblogs and groupwork cannot generally be copied from external sources.

Andrews, in an article entitled 'The end of the essay?' traces the history and development of the essay within education and concludes that it is not only alive but remains the 'default genre of assessment' (2003:126). However, since this remains a predominantly academic-only text type, it is exhilarating and useful for students to also have the options of synthesising information using e-posters, databases, weblogs and so on. The opportunity to present to peers in a novel format also encourages students to have an excitement and engagement with ideas.

More research is needed on the extent to which students are adequately prepared for new assignment types. While support guides and writing workshops are standardly provided for non-native speakers and self-selected native speakers, they are not routinely encouraged for all students. These often provide generic academic writing help, yet the writing required within a university course may ask for many differing text types and more text-specific help would be beneficial (Hewings and Hewings, 2001). Scaffolding help such as third year students discussing assignment requirements with first years and peer discussions of assignment rubric would assist in students' understanding of assessment methods across and within disciplines as well as helping with the worries that unfamiliar task types may bring. As it seems likely that the range of university assignments will continue to be developed, it should be recognised that students need scaffolded support in embracing these.

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Appendix One: Bawe disciplines and interviews

Discipline	No. of interviews	Discipline	No. of interviews
Anthropology	3	Hltm	3
Archaeology	2	Law	3
Biological Sciences	4	Mathematics	4
Computing	3	Medicine	1
Economics	3	Philosophy	3
Engineering	4	Physics	3
English literature	3	Psychology	3
Food Sciences	1	Publishing	3
Health	3	Sociology	3
History	3	Theatre Studies	3

58 interviews in total

Appendix Two: Assignment names and disciplines

Assignment name (as given by lecturer)	Discipline(s)
Essay	All subjects, barring Physics post 2005.
Dissertation	Anthropology, Archaeology, Biology, Computing, Engineering (done as group), Health, History, Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Publishing, Sociology, Theatre Studies
Project report	Biology, Computing, Economics, Engineering, Law, Mathematics, Sociology, Physics, Psychology
Poster	Anthropology, Biology, Computing, Engineering, Health, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology
Problem sheets	Anthropology, Biology, Economics, Food Sciences, Hltm (Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism Management), Law, Mathematics
Presentation (may be combined with a poster or written up as an essay)	Anthropology, Health, History, Philosophy, Physics, Publishing, Sociology
Reflective writing / journal / *blog / *seminar diary	Engineering, English, Hltm, Medicine, Philosophy, Theatre Studies
Group project	Archaeology, Engineering, Health, Physics, Publishing
Critical evaluation of own writing or task	Anthropology, English, Computing, Theatre Studies, Hltm

Report	Computing, Food Sciences, Hltm, Law, Psychology
Book review	History, Psychology, Sociology, Theatre Studies
Laboratory report	Archaeology, Biology, Physics
*Website evaluation	Medicine, Theatre Studies
Research Project	Biology, Mathematics, Theatre Studies
Case study	Health, Medicine, Publishing
Journal article	Biology, Physics
Critical review of an article	Archaeology, Physics
Marketing proposal / Business plan	Publishing, Engineering
*Develop a web site	Publishing
Case notes, Draft appeal to House of Lords, Advice notes to a client, Submissions in preparation for a case, Post mortem after moots, *Mock trial	Law
Field Study / Ethnography	Sociology
Business letter (from publisher to author)	Publishing
*Database project report	History
*Group reflective essay (using WebCT)	Health
*Narrative fiction	Sociology
*Press release, *Fact sheet, *Technical abstract, *Persuasive writing	Physics (communicating science module)
*Letter of advice to friend written from 1830s perspective; *Maths in Action project (lay audience)	Mathematics
*Response to the past (students given option of an essay or alternative 'response' using realia, images, digital format, etc.)	Theatre Studies
*Crossword / *Quiz	Anthropology
*Poem inspired by a piece of literature	English Literature
Research proposal	Health
Summary of the literature	History
Technical writing i.e. computer code with comments interspersed.	Computing
Portfolio for job application (C.V., application letter, self-reflection)	Publishing
Personal development statement	Health
Mock grant application followed by review of other students' grant applications	Biology
Journal abstract	Physics

* Assignment known to be recently-adopted