Mixed assessment strategies and inclusivity

Dr Parama Chaudhury, Dr Silvia dal Bianco and Dr Cloda Jenkins, UCL Economics and CTaLE[1]

UCL Education Conference, April 1st 2019

Our story

- The problem with 'one size fits all' assessment
- Moving to mixed assessment in economics to allow different types of learners to reach their potential
- Next steps to assess impact of mixed assessment

Our BSc Economics degree structure has been fairly stable over time*

1st year (weight 1)	2nd year (weight 3)	3rd year (weight 5)
90 compulsory credits *Economics (30)* Maths (30) Stats (15) Applied (15) **30 optional credits** Choose from 2 introductory economics options (15 each) or Electives	**90 compulsory credits** *Micro (30)* *Macro (30)* *Econometrics (30)* **30 optional credits** *Choose from approx [8] intermediate economics options (15) or Electives*	**60 credits** *Choose from approx [8] Advanced economics options (15/30)* **30 credits** *Choose from approx [8] Advanced economics options or [8] intermediate economics options (15)* **30 credits** *Choose from approx [8] Advanced economics options or [8] intermediate economics options or Electives (15)*

*apart from changes made by UCL – units/credits; weighting and degree classification changes coming

Circa 2012/13 almost all modules assessed with 100% summer term exam

September → Formative homework and teaching → April/May exams
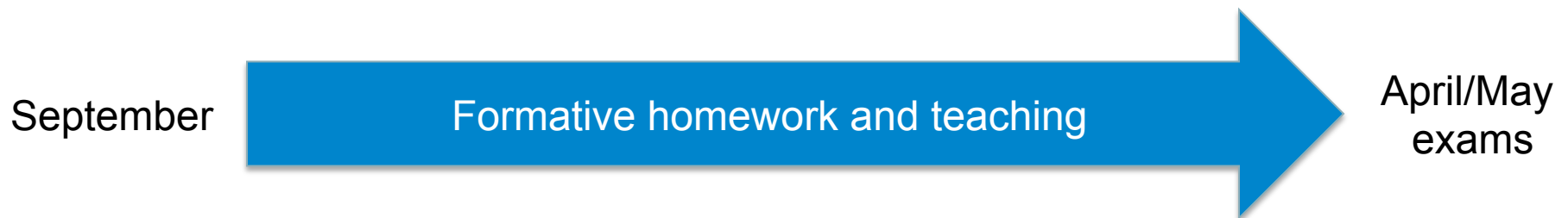
| Term-time engagement with learning?	Clustering - effort and stress	Closed book – similar question style
"zero incentive for students to do their best when doing (formative) coursework, as well as to actively participate in seminars."(NSS 2016)	*"Having exams as your only assessment puts you under huge pressure."* (NSS 2016) *"I wonder how a student is supposed to perform at the best of his/her capabilities if they have eight exams in three weeks."* (NSS 2018)	*"Not enough emphasise on graded writing and group work, which may limit the skills to gain."* (NSS 2016)

One size fits all will work for some learners and will not work at all for others

"*Modules being assessed 100% exam…..doesn't demonstrate correctly the ability of the student because it doesn't consider the work done over the year*". (NSS 2018)

"*The fact that all exams take place at the end of the year and represent 100% of the mark seriously undermined my chances to get good grades.…...I did a year abroad in the US where they have midterms and finals, as well as coursework that counts and I found this system much better and allowed me to have better grades and less stress. I seriously hope UCL changes this in the future.*" (NSS 2018)

Different learners respond in different ways and have different prior experiences

One size fits all does not fit with our roll-out of research-based education curriculum
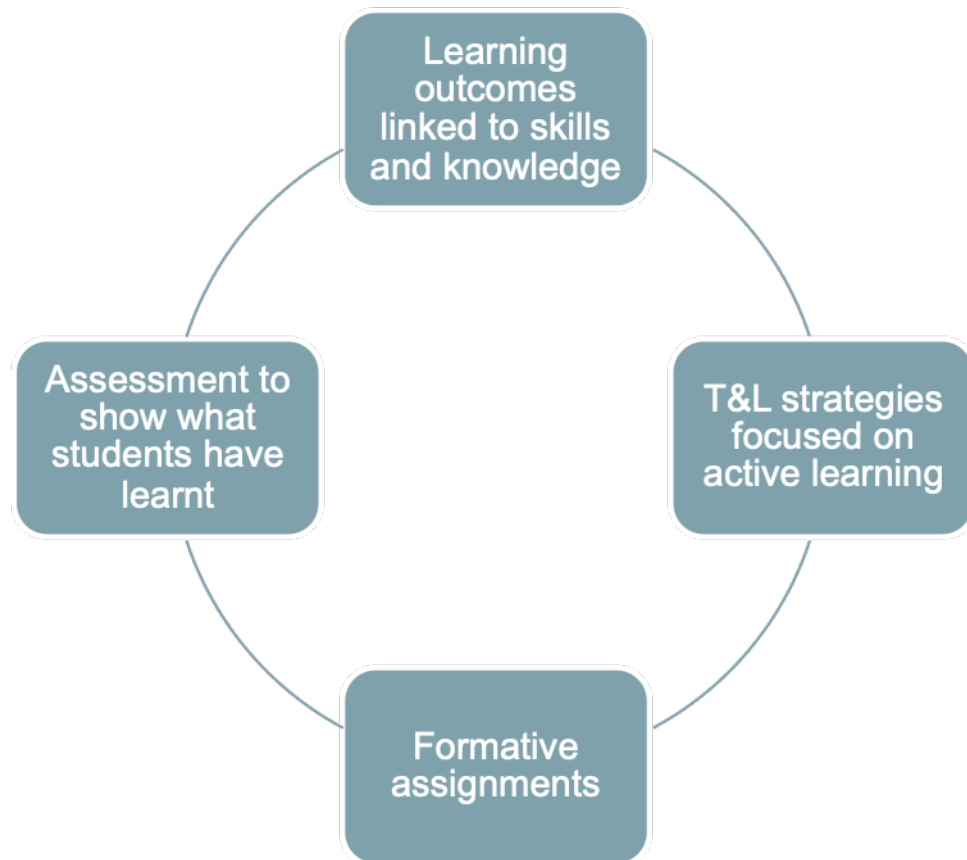
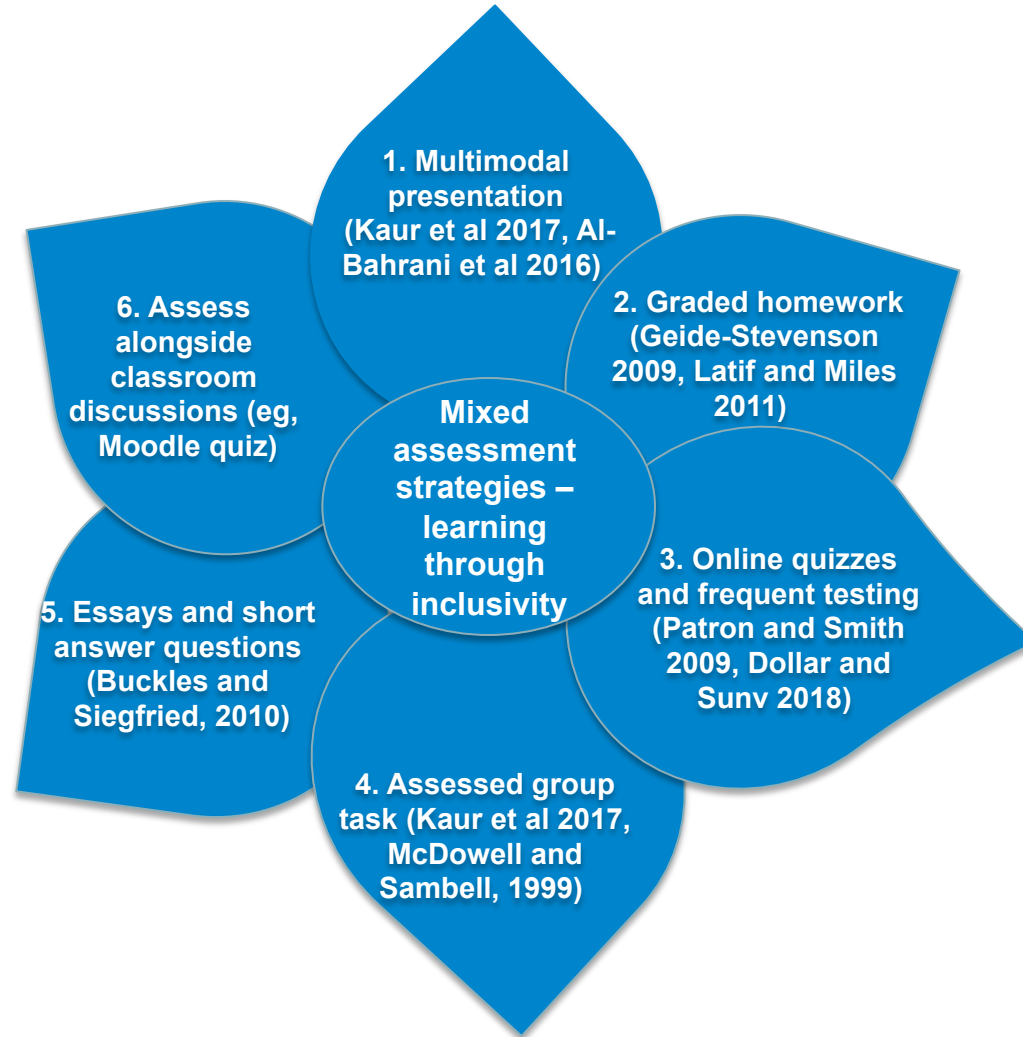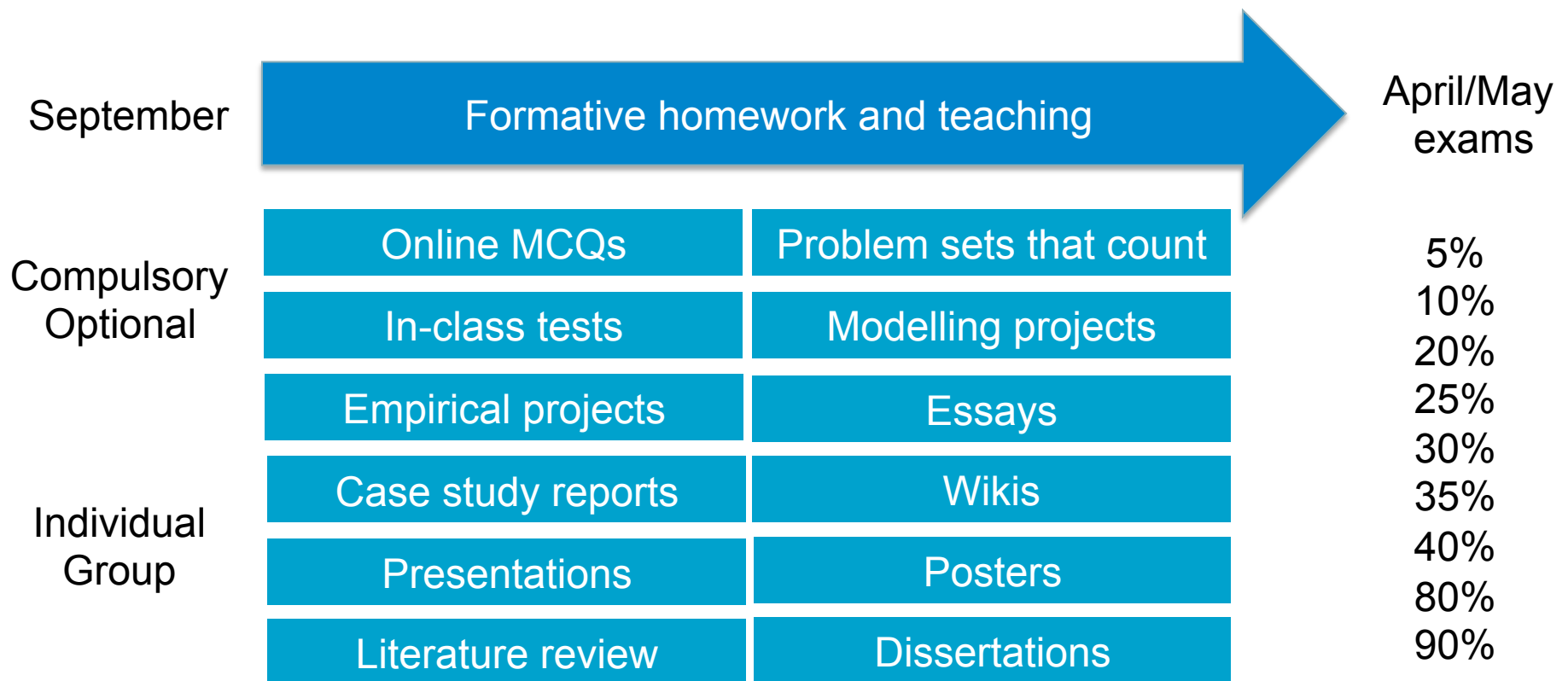# Literature emphasises value of mixed assessment for diverse learners

Assessment design could be multi-modal in order to better define each student's learning outcome (Al-Bahrani et al., 2016)

Mixed assessment strategies – learning through inclusivity

1. Multimodal presentation (Kaur et al 2017, Al-Bahrani et al 2016)

2. Graded homework (Geide-Stevenson 2009, Latif and Miles 2011)

3. Online quizzes and frequent testing (Patron and Smith 2009, Dollar and Sunv 2018)

4. Assessed group task (Kaur et al 2017, McDowell and Sambell, 1999)

5. Essays and short answer questions (Buckles and Siegfried, 2010)

6. Assess alongside classroom discussions (eg, Moodle quiz)

As of 2018/19, 50% of modules have mixed assessment strategies during term-time

September	Formative homework and teaching		April/May exams

Compulsory Optional	Online MCQs	Problem sets that count	5%
	In-class tests	Modelling projects	10%
	Empirical projects	Essays	20%
			25%
Individual Group	Case study reports	Wikis	30%
	Presentations	Posters	35%
	Literature review	Dissertations	40%
			80%
			90%

Mixed assessment strategies require effort to design and implement effectively

Lecturer choices	Support	Extra contact hours	Guidance and practice opportunities	Feedback on multiple formative	Marking criteria discussions
	Learner considerations	Choice or compulsory questions?	Mixed question style	Open questions/activities	Spread deadlines
	Group work	Assign or students choose?	Individual contribution mark?	Training on how to work in group?	Peer marking?

Managing UCL rules and resources	Accessibility	Lecturecast	Online submissions	Online activities (and opt-out)	Varied outputs
	Special arrangements	SORA-adjustments	EC mitigation		
	Academic rules	Anonymity	Moderation and external examining	Provisional marks	

Our working hypothesis is that mixed assessment strategies improve student outcomes and student experience

- Learners choose options with assessment strategies that suit them best and do better as a result
- Learners see how they are doing during the year, respond and do better as a result
- Learners spread load of work and assessment, resulting in less stress at peak exam period
- Learners are better prepared for later learning in degree and for life after UCL

Review of headline statistics on modules over time suggest mixed evidence

- Little change in composition of students choosing modules with mixed assessment (gender, disability, ethnicity, domicile)

- Across all students in a module, proportion of fails lower with mixed assessment in some modules. Little change at top end of distribution or in variance.

Next step is to empirically assess impact of assessment changes on learners

Impact of assessment on grades and other outcomes for different student types

Control for student characteristics

- **Observables**: gender, age, country of origin (domestic vs international students), ethnicity, language, parents' education
- **Unobservables**: learning types, learning styles, ability

Control for other parallel changes in module

Where is the data? How access it? Outcomes other than grades?
Can UCL make it easier for education researchers?

Get in touch with us at CTaLE

Dr Parama Chaudhury, p.chaudhury@ucl.ac.uk

Dr Silvia dal Bianco, s.dalbianco@ucl.ac.uk

Dr Cloda Jenkins, cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk

Find out more at https://ctale.org/

Follow us on social media:

- Twitter: @CTaLE_UCL

- Linkedin:
  UCL Centre for Teaching and Learning Economics