

Ensuring distribution of effort and making sure students were on track

This case study concerns a Level 1 undergraduate module undertaken by approximately 300 students across a variety of Construction disciplines. The module is assessed by an end examination (50%) and coursework (50%). In previous years, the coursework required the students to produce three sketch details of various parts of a dwelling (foundation, external wall and a pitched roof). The assignment was handed out at the beginning of the module and students were given ten weeks to undertake all three sketch details. Structuring the coursework in such a way presented a number of problems:

- *There was a lack of motivation from students in undertaking the coursework. Students frequently left the coursework to the last minute, resulting in poor quality, rushed sketches and low coursework marks*
- *It was common for students to make the same mistake on all three sketch details (for instance, incorrect annotation or use of an incorrect graphical symbol), resulting in them being penalised for the same mistake three times*
- *The students gained little benefit from the detailed feedback that was provided on their work.*

*Students often commented that they ignored the feedback, as they were not required to undertake any more sketch details within the module. **The assessment was restructured and divided into three separate elements, corresponding to each of the sketch details.** Each element of coursework was issued early at the beginning of the module but the **hand-in dates for each coursework element were distributed evenly across the semester**, giving the students approximately three weeks to complete each sketch detail. The tutorials were also re-structured. Students were encouraged to present draft sketch details to the tutors for comment during the tutorial sessions, and in some of the sessions there was a requirement for the students to spend some of their time undertaking draft sketches in class. The impact of redesigning the coursework in such a way was as follows:*

- *Feedback on the sketch details was valued by the students and used to inform future submissions · Very few students repeated errors from one sketch detail to another*
- *Student motivation increased and draft details were presented during the tutorial sessions*
- *Student marks improved overall. On average, the marks obtained for each of the sketch details improved incrementally, with the highest mark being obtained for the final sketch detail.*