

## CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION – THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES\*

Alexandrina Mihaela POPESCU<sup>1</sup>, Andreea Aurora Maria BUGA<sup>2</sup>

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18023831

### **Abstract**

*Continuous assessment represents a fundamental pedagogical tool in contemporary higher education, contributing to the improvement of the teaching-learning process and to the development of students' competencies. This article analyzes the role of continuous assessment in the context of higher education, exploring its advantages and disadvantages, practical implementation methods, as well as experiences from Romania and other European countries. The study highlights that continuous assessment, when properly applied, promotes deep learning, reduces anxiety associated with final examinations, and provides constant feedback for improving academic performance. At the same time, challenges are identified related to necessary resources, faculty workload, and the need for adequate preparation for the efficient implementation of this system.*

**Key words:** *Continuous assessment, Higher education, Academic performance, Feedback, Anxiety.*

### **1. Introduction**

In the current context of European higher education, student assessment represents an essential component of the educational process, directly influencing the quality of training and academic performance. The Bologna Process, initiated in 1999, has brought about significant changes in the structure and methodology of assessment in higher education, promoting the transition from traditional summative assessment to a more complex system that includes continuous assessment as a central element (Bologna Process, 1999). Romania, as a participating state in the Bologna Process, has gradually implemented the necessary reforms for alignment with the standards of the European Higher Education Area. The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), established in 2005,

---

\*This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. Authors retain the copyright of this article.

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor PhD, Teacher Training Department, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: alexandrina.popescu@edu.ucv.ro, corresponding author, ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2276-3941>

<sup>2</sup>Senior Lecturer PhD, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: ada.buga@yahoo.com, ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0008-6410-7305>

continuously monitors the quality of university study programs, including methods of student assessment (ARACIS, 2005). Continuous assessment is defined as a process of systematic monitoring of students' progress throughout the entire study period, through multiple assessment instruments and methods, thus providing a complete and accurate picture of the level of knowledge, competencies, and skills acquired (Day *et al.*, 2018). Unlike traditional final assessment, which focuses exclusively on the result of a single examination, continuous assessment allows for the identification of learning difficulties in real time and prompt intervention for their remediation (Boud, 2013).

## **2. Theoretical Foundations**

Continuous assessment represents an educational evaluation method designed to monitor student progress throughout the entire course, rather than relying exclusively on a final examination. This approach integrates various evaluation formats, such as periodic tests, projects, assignments, active participation in class, and other activities, offering a comprehensive perspective on student performance (Vaessen *et al.*, 2017).

In the context of higher education, continuous assessment is not limited only to the cognitive dimension of learning but also takes into consideration other essential aspects, such as practical competencies, student attitudes and values. According to modern pedagogical principles, this form of assessment promotes the development of students' metacognitive competencies, encouraging them to be actively involved in their own learning process and to develop self-regulation abilities (Heritage, 2018).

In the specialized literature, a clear distinction is made between two main types of assessment: formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, aims to provide information about the level of achievement of specific learning objectives, and the results obtained serve to inform and stimulate improvement actions (Ismail *et al.*, 2022). This type of assessment may include quick tests, assignments, and other verifications performed during the lesson, with the main purpose of improving learning. On the other hand, summative assessment focuses on measuring the final results of learning at the end of a study period or educational program. It provides a global evaluation of the knowledge and competencies acquired, often serving certification or classification purposes. In practice, most forms of assessment can serve both purposes, and effective continuous assessment integrates both formative and summative elements (Pastor & Manuel, 2012).

The importance of formative assessment in the context of continuous assessment has been emphasized by recent research demonstrating that constant and constructive feedback contributes significantly to improving students' academic performance. A study conducted on economics students showed that students who benefit from self-reflection activities before evaluative tests obtain superior results and manifest a reduced level of stress compared to those subjected only to traditional summative assessment (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022). The main advantage of continuous

assessment consists in the fact that both students and teaching staff have real-time information about the learning process, which facilitates the identification and addressing of potential formative deficiencies (Boud, 2013). This approach allows students to fully demonstrate their level of knowledge and understanding, offering multiple opportunities to prove their acquired competencies.

Empirical studies show that continuous assessment promotes long-term information retention. Unlike intensive last-minute preparation for final examinations, the continuous assessment system encourages students to use knowledge on a regular basis, which consolidates learning and facilitates the practical application of theoretical concepts. This method also reduces anxiety associated with tests, offering students a constant flow of opportunities to demonstrate their competencies, instead of depending on performance at a single moment (O'Connor, 2021).

An important aspect highlighted by recent research is the inclusive character of continuous assessment. A study conducted on psychology program students demonstrated that students with additional educational needs did not obtain significantly lower scores than their peers without such needs when they were evaluated through a continuous system, which supports the argument that continuous assessment does not differentially affect students who already require additional support (Day *et al.*, 2018).

For teaching staff, continuous assessment offers the opportunity to obtain constant feedback about the effectiveness of teaching methods used and about the extent to which educational objectives are achieved. This allows for the adjustment of didactic strategies in real time and the personalization of approaches according to students' specific needs. Continuous assessment facilitates early identification of students in difficulty and allows for timely interventions to support them (Ismail *et al.*, 2022).

At the institutional level, the implementation of continuous assessment contributes to ensuring the quality of educational programs and to alignment with European standards established through the Bologna Process. Continuous and comprehensive assessment promotes a holistic approach to education, evaluating not only academic performance but also non-academic competencies, attitudes, values, and co-curricular activities, thus ensuring that students' overall development is taken into consideration and stimulated (Creatrix Campus, 2024).

One of the main disadvantages of continuous assessment is the considerable workload it imposes on both students and teaching staff. The implementation of this system requires substantial commitment from professors for the development and correction of various assessment formats throughout the semester. This requirement can become problematic especially in the case of large classes, where group size and time limitations represent significant obstacles (Vaessen *et al.*, 2017). The size of study formations and time allocation represent major problems in implementing continuous assessment. Established standards recommend a maximum number of 35 students for active classes, and in no case should 45 students per teaching staff member be exceeded. Exceeding these limits significantly affects the quality of assessment and professors' capacity to offer personalized feedback to each student.

Although continuous assessment has the potential to reduce anxiety by distributing assessment tasks throughout the semester, there is also the risk that frequent assessments may increase pressure on students. If not implemented in a balanced manner, continuous assessment can generate constant stress and a feeling of overload, thus affecting student engagement and motivation. An additional risk identified in the literature is that incorrect application of continuous assessment may lead to students focusing exclusively on activities that have greater weight in the final grade, thus neglecting other important learning opportunities. This pragmatic approach on the part of students can compromise the formative purpose of continuous assessment, transforming it into a simple collection of grades instead of an authentic process of learning and development (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022).

The implementation of continuous assessment raises important questions related to standardization and comparability. While there is indisputable value in uniformity of content and testing methods, it is important to recognize that identical approach in assessment does not always guarantee equity. Indeed, in the aspiration towards standardization, systems or teachers can functionally disadvantage many students, and some argue that this result is certain (UNESCO, 2017). The challenge consists in finding a balance between the need for comparability of results and the need to adapt assessment to the diversity of students' learning needs and styles. Effective implementation of continuous assessment requires careful planning and adherence to fundamental principles. The principles of continuous and comprehensive assessment presuppose that it must be: comprehensive, continuous, diagnostic, formative, progress-oriented, and participatory. These principles ensure that assessment is not limited to measuring academic knowledge but addresses the holistic development of the student.

The continuous assessment process can be structured in six essential steps: establishing learning objectives taking into account initial knowledge; creating key performance indicators and assessment criteria; selecting assessment tools and techniques; implementing the educational environment in which objective evidence of the level of achievement is generated; collecting learning evidence and academic parameterization for program adaptation; and final assessment. To successfully implement continuous assessment, teaching staff can use a variety of tools and methods. These include: checklists for teachers to perform complementary punctual assessments; flipped classrooms that focus on learning through practice and not on memorization; class journals; lectures; group dynamics; debates for generating group dynamics; practical work; problem-solving; individual and collective projects for improving interrelationships; and direct observation.

In the current context, technology plays an important role in supporting continuous assessment. Learning management platforms and online tests can be used to support the continuous assessment process, facilitating efficient administration of assessments, data collection, and timely provision of feedback. Technological tools also allow for plagiarism detection and monitoring of academic integrity in online examinations.

Recent research proposes innovative approaches to continuous assessment that emphasize self-reflection and meaningful learning. A quasi-experimental study

conducted in a mathematics course for students in economics and business tested a new continuous assessment method that replaces intermediate evaluative tests with self-reflection activities. Within these activities, students not only complete the task but also indicate their level of confidence in the answers. At the end of the activity, students must assess their current position in the learning process and identify areas that require improvement. The results indicated that this new assessment method promotes meaningful learning and generates better academic results compared to traditional continuous assessment, while students expressed high satisfaction, mentioning that the method allows them to understand their formative state and address deficiencies before undertaking assessable activities (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022).

The Bologna Process, launched in 1999 and implemented in 48 European countries, has had a significant impact on how assessment is conceived and applied in European higher education. The main objectives of the Bologna Process have included the introduction of a three-cycle study system, ensuring mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad, and implementation of a quality assurance system for consolidating the relevance and quality of teaching and learning (European Commission, 2024). An essential tool developed within the Bologna Process is the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which plays a key role in curricular design and validation of learning achievements. In the ECTS system, credits reflect the total volume of work necessary for achieving program objectives, which may include learning, reading, academic writing, laboratory research, and many others. Correct implementation of ECTS presents considerable challenges, understanding and developing learning outcomes, as well as developing reliable measures of workload being challenges that require major effort and continuous training, as well as exchange of experience within and between higher education institutions (Bologna Process, 2020).

Implementation of Bologna reforms and continuous assessment has varied significantly among participating countries. Some countries have made considerable progress in implementing reforms through the development of new curricula and assessment systems, as well as through the adoption of adequate legislation reflecting Bologna objectives. However, other countries have carried out reforms without adequate discussions or have made minimal progress in Bologna implementation. More seriously, sometimes reforms have been carried out deficiently or with little thought, which has worsened the situation instead of improving it (Gaebel *et al.*, 2008). At the institutional level, most universities indeed implement the reforms agreed upon in the Bologna Process, but they are often at the legislative mercy of their governments, which can impede real progress. The higher education system in Romania is part of the European Higher Education Area and the Bologna Process. ARACIS is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Thus, standards and procedures for internal and external evaluation are aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (Eurydice, 2024). In Romania, the assessment system used in pre-university and university

education includes elements of continuous assessment. For grades five through twelve, a grading system from 1 to 10 is used, with 10 being the best grade, 1 being the worst, and 5 being the minimum passing grade. The continuous assessment system is also used, with individual grades for each test, oral examination, project, assignment, or classwork being recorded in the school catalog (Wikipedia, 2024).

Romania was the first country in Southeast Europe to establish a national quality assurance framework for higher education and a public agency for continuous monitoring of the quality of Romanian higher education programs. ARACIS was established in 2005 and is an autonomous public institution of national interest (ASEM Education, 2024). According to the Methodological Guide on Writing Learning Outcomes, one credit comprises 25–30 hours of teaching and individual study hours; for uniformity in the university environment, the Methodological Guide recommends a multiple of 5 credits per module/discipline, respectively 125-150 hours of teaching, practice hours, and individual study hours. Credits are included in all school documents along with grades obtained in discipline evaluations. In higher education institutions in Romania, the basis for awarding ECTS is the combination of learning outcomes achieved and student workload: the student must fulfill the prescribed workload and obtain the expected learning outcomes. A study conducted in May-June 2022 on 60 teaching staff members from Romanian universities analyzed how they assess their own digital competence and how they use digital assessment, as well as what training needs they have in these regards. The study attempted to identify the main concerns, challenges, and obstacles that higher education teaching staff encounter when designing and using digital assessment. The results indicate the importance of empowering teachers through continuous learning, adopting flexible hybrid models, and rethinking assessment strategies for digital literacy (Timișoara University, 2024).

In the Romanian context, implementation of continuous assessment faces specific challenges related to resources, teacher preparation, and organizational culture of institutions. However, there are also significant opportunities for improving the quality of education through the adoption of innovative assessment practices and through the use of modern educational technologies. An OECD report on assessment and quality assurance in education in Romania emphasizes the need to consolidate the assessment and evaluation system to offer every student the chance to achieve their full potential. The report mentions that Romania is currently implementing an ambitious new curriculum, focused on student-led learning and development of key competencies, but student assessment is not in accord with the aspirations of the new curriculum. While the goal is to ensure that all young Romanians develop competencies for the 21st century, examinations remain focused on a narrow range of academic knowledge and limit the educational future of the majority of students (OECD, 2017).

### **3. Students' Perceptions of Summative Assessment – Empirical Study**

The empirical research conducted through the questionnaire investigated the perceptions of 110 second-year students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, enrolled in the Psycho-pedagogical Training Program. This sample selection is

significant from a research perspective, as participants have a dual perspective: on one hand, they are direct beneficiaries of the university assessment system, and on the other hand, they are preparing for the teaching profession, which gives them special sensitivity to assessment issues. The age distribution of respondents shows a concentration in the academic maturity intervals: 45 % are between 20-22 years old, while 55 % are in the 23-25 age range. This distribution suggests a sample composed of students with consolidated university experience, who have had sufficient time to experience various forms of assessment and to develop informed opinions about their effectiveness. The average age of respondents, placed around 22-23 years, indicates that they have traversed at least half of their bachelor's degree course and can offer mature perspectives on the assessment process. It is important to mention that the questionnaire completion time (15–20 minutes) indicates an adequate level of involvement on the part of respondents, and ensuring data confidentiality allowed for obtaining sincere and authentic responses, without fear of academic repercussions or external pressures.

Results regarding the degree of exposure to continuous assessment in the 2024–2025 academic year reveal a fragmented and non-uniform reality of implementation of this system within the faculty. The distribution of responses highlights the following structure: 45 % of respondents were continuously assessed in few disciplines (25–50 %), 25 % in approximately half of the disciplines (50–75 %), 20 % in very few disciplines or not at all (under 25 %), 10 % did not answer this question. These data suggest an uneven and inconsistent implementation of continuous assessment at the institutional level. The fact that only 25 % of students report the use of continuous assessment in most disciplines (50–75 %) contrasts significantly with the recommendations of the Bologna Process and with the objectives of the European Higher Education Area, which promote continuous assessment as standard practice. The dominant result – 45 % of students being continuously assessed only in 25–50 % of disciplines – indicates institutional resistance or a lack of capacity in implementing this system.

This situation can be interpreted from several perspectives. The partial implementation of continuous assessment may reflect structural limitations of the Romanian university system: large student volume per teaching staff member, limited resources for developing and correcting multiple assessments, and possibly insufficient preparation of the teaching body in continuous assessment methodology. This interpretation is supported by international literature that identifies class size and teaching staff workload as major obstacles in implementing continuous assessment in higher education. A percentage of 20 % of students reporting continuous assessment in very few disciplines (under 25 %) suggests the existence of a traditional academic culture, resistant to change, where final summative assessment remains the dominant norm. This resistance can be attributed both to the inertia of the educational system and to a certain reticence on the part of teaching staff toward new assessment methodologies.

The 10 % of respondents who did not answer this question may indicate a lack of clarity or understanding of the concept of continuous assessment. It is possible that some students do not make a clear distinction between formative continuous

assessment and periodic summative assessment, which suggests the need for more transparent communication and better education regarding different types of academic assessment. These results indicate an urgent need for standardization and extension of continuous assessment practices at the faculty level. For students to benefit from the advantages evaluated in the following sections, a wider and more coherent implementation of this assessment system is essential.

The study identifies four main forms of continuous assessment that students experienced in the previous academic year: Active participation in class/seminar; Portfolios; Oral presentations; and Practical evaluations (technical demonstrations, trial lessons). These four forms of assessment reflect a methodological diversity relevant to the specific profile of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports and for psycho-pedagogical preparation.

Active participation in class/seminar represents the most frequent and, at the same time, the easiest to implement form of continuous assessment. It evaluates not only physical presence but also the cognitive and behavioral involvement of students in the educational process. From a pedagogical perspective, this form of assessment promotes active learning and academic dialogue, essential elements for the training of future teaching staff.

Portfolios represent a comprehensive and complex assessment method that allows students to demonstrate competency development throughout the entire semester. In the context of psycho-pedagogical training, portfolios can include reflections on one's own pedagogical practice, lesson plans, critical analyses of specialized literature, and evidence of professional development. This form of assessment is particularly valuable because it promotes metacognition and self-reflection - essential competencies for future teachers. Oral presentations develop communication and public speaking competencies, fundamental for the teaching profession. These presentations allow for the assessment not only of theoretical knowledge but also of the capacity to structure, synthesize, and communicate it effectively to an audience. For future physical education teachers, the ability to clearly explain complex concepts, to demonstrate techniques, and to motivate students is crucial. Practical evaluations (technical demonstrations and trial lessons) are perhaps the most relevant forms of assessment for Physical Education and Sports students. They simulate the real context of the teaching profession, allowing for the assessment of applied pedagogical competencies: lesson planning, correct technical demonstration, class management, effective communication with simulated students, and the capacity to adapt didactic strategies according to audience response.

It is important to observe which forms of continuous assessment are missing from students' experience. Periodic tests (every 2–4 weeks) are not mentioned as being used systematically, although specialized literature identifies them as one of the most effective instruments for monitoring academic progress and for providing regular feedback. Their absence may limit students' capacity to continuously assess their level of understanding and to identify knowledge gaps before final assessments.

Structured homework assignments evaluated systematically appear to be underutilized, although they offer valuable opportunities for independent application

of knowledge and for developing autonomous study skills. Individual or group projects are not explicitly mentioned in students' responses, which may indicate a lack of experience with this form of assessment that promotes collaborative learning and development of teamwork competencies - essential in the teaching profession.

The diversity of experienced assessment forms is satisfactory from the perspective of relevance to the teaching profession but limited from the perspective of frequency and methodological variety. For optimal implementation of continuous assessment, it would be necessary to include other complementary forms, such as periodic tests and structured projects, which would ensure more frequent and more systematic monitoring of academic progress. Analysis of data regarding the perception of continuous assessment advantages reveals a nuanced and complex image of students' experience with this assessment system. For each investigated dimension, we will examine the distribution of responses and their profound significance.

Regarding the reduction of stress and anxiety, results show a significant division in students' perception of the effect of continuous assessment on academic stress. The majority (52 %) perceive continuous assessment as having a beneficial effect on stress reduction, which confirms the theoretical hypothesis that distribution of assessments throughout the semester diminishes the pressure associated with a single high-stakes final examination. This perception is in accordance with research demonstrating that continuous assessment offers students more opportunities to demonstrate competencies and reduces dependence on performance at a single moment.

However, the existence of a significant segment (25 %) that perceives continuous assessment as being stressful deserves special attention. This perception may reflect several realities: assessments that are too frequent can create a feeling of constant pressure, transforming the semester into an uninterrupted succession of evaluative moments; some students may have a learning style that favors intensive study periods followed by concentrated assessments; the absence of a clear dedicated preparation period may generate anxiety in students who prefer a more structured and concentrated approach. The 23 % in a neutral position suggest either a lack of sufficient experience with both forms of assessment to make a valid comparison, or a perception that stress is similar regardless of the adopted assessment form. Constant feedback for improving performance represents the most positive perception among all investigated advantages, with 60 % of respondents recognizing the value of constant feedback. The total absence of 'total disagreement' type responses is particularly significant, indicating a general consensus on the importance of feedback in the learning process. This result validates one of the fundamental premises of continuous assessment: its capacity to offer regular and actionable information about academic progress. For future teachers, the experience of receiving regular feedback is particularly valuable, as it helps them understand the importance of this practice and integrate it into their own future didactic strategies. The 27 % in a neutral position may reflect situations where the feedback received has been inconsistent, too generic, or delayed to be useful, emphasizing the importance of quality and not just quantity of feedback offered.

Regarding motivation for constant study, the majority of students (60 %) recognize that continuous assessment motivates them to maintain a constant study rhythm throughout the semester, preventing the phenomenon of last-minute learning or 'cramming'. This perception is fundamentally important from the perspective of learning quality, as research in educational psychology consistently demonstrates that temporally distributed learning is superior to learning concentrated in short periods. Continuous assessment functions as a system of regular 'impulses' that keep the student in constant contact with the material, facilitating knowledge consolidation and progressive integration of new concepts with those previously learned. This pattern of sustained learning is essential for the development of complex competencies and for long-term retention of information.

The 25 % segment that does not perceive continuous assessment as being motivating for constant study may reflect: students with high intrinsic motivation who would study constantly regardless of the assessment system, situations where assessments are too spaced to maintain a constant study rhythm, and the perception that motivation should come from intrinsic interest in the subject, not from pressure of external assessments. Multiple chances for demonstrating learning - this advantage of continuous assessment is perceived positively by 60 % of respondents and represents one of the defining characteristics of continuous assessment: distribution of evaluative 'risk' over multiple moments and forms of assessment. From the perspective of equity and inclusiveness in education, this aspect is crucial because: it reduces the impact of a single poor performance on the final grade, allows students to recover after partial failures, offers opportunities to demonstrate competencies through various modalities (oral, written, practical), and accommodates different learning styles and types of intelligence.

For students in the field of physical education and sports, where performance can be affected by variable factors such as physical form, emotional state, or external conditions, multiple assessment opportunities offer a more complete and more faithful image of real competencies. The 20 % in disagreement may perceive multiple assessments rather as multiple opportunities for failure than as chances for success, which may indicate the need for emotional support and effective strategies for managing assessment anxiety. The perception that continuous assessment contributes to deeper and more durable learning is shared by 58 % of respondents, reflecting understanding of the long-term benefits of this assessment system. This perception is validated by research in cognitive psychology demonstrating that: periodic reactivation of information (through regular assessments) consolidates memory traces and facilitates long-term retention; cognitive effort necessary for preparing for multiple assessments promotes deep processing of information; repeated application of knowledge in diverse evaluative contexts facilitates transfer and generalization; regular feedback allows for refinement of understanding and correction of misconceptions before they become consolidated. The 25 % who do not perceive this contribution may reflect a personal experience in which continuous assessment was implemented superficially, concentrating on memorization and reproduction instead of deep understanding. Also, students who have developed effective strategies for deep

learning independent of the form of assessment may perceive that the assessment system has minimal impact on the quality of their learning.

The majority of respondents (58 %) perceive continuous assessment as offering a more faithful reflection of the real level of knowledge and competencies compared to a single final assessment. It is remarkable that 43 % are in the 'agree' category (versus only 15 % in 'totally agree'), suggesting reasonable but not enthusiastic acceptance of this premise. This perception has solid foundations from the perspective of educational measurement theory: multiple assessments offer a broader 'sampling' of the competency domain, reducing measurement error and the impact of circumstantial factors (momentary state, luck/bad luck in subject selection, etc.). For future teachers, understanding this principle is crucial in developing their own assessment practices.

The significant segment of 27 % in a neutral position suggests uncertainty or mixed experiences. This group may include: students who consider that both forms of assessment have limitations in complete capture of competencies, those who perceive that their performance varies significantly between different evaluative contexts, and students who do not have sufficient experience to make an informed comparison. The absence of 'total disagreement' type responses is significant, indicating that no one completely contests the usefulness of continuous assessment in reflecting real competencies. The clear preference of the majority of students (55 %) for a combination between continuous assessment and final summative assessment represents the most significant finding of the entire research. This preference is not a compromise position or indecision but reflects a mature and nuanced understanding of the complexity of academic assessment.

The preference for a mixed model can be interpreted as an implicit recognition of the fact that different forms of assessment serve complementary purposes. This preference has important implications for curricular design and for assessment policies at the institutional level. Students' preference suggests the need for a model in which continuous assessment represents a significant (but not total) part of the final grade, complemented by a final summative assessment. An optimal model could allocate approximately 60–70 % of the grade to continuous assessment and 30–40 % to final assessment, thus ensuring that: constant effort throughout the semester is rewarded and valued; there is an incentive for maintaining a constant study rhythm; final assessment remains significant and requires serious preparation; students have the opportunity to demonstrate synthesis and integration of knowledge. The 15 % segment that does not manifest a clear preference also deserves attention. This category may include: adaptable students who perform well regardless of the form of assessment; those who have not experienced both forms enough to develop a preference; students who consider that the form of assessment should be adapted to the specificity of each discipline; those who are more concerned with the quality of learning than with the assessment modality.

Qualitative analysis of data reveals the existence of interesting paradoxes in students' perception of continuous assessment: The stress paradox: While continuous assessment is perceived by the majority as reducing stress associated with final

assessment, it simultaneously generates a feeling of constant pressure for a significant part of students. The workload paradox: Although theoretically continuous assessment should redistribute learning effort without increasing it, many students perceive it as generating a larger total volume of work. The multiple chances paradox: While multiple assessment opportunities are seen as an advantage by the majority, some students perceive them as multiple opportunities for failure or as additional requirements.

These paradoxes do not invalidate the benefits of continuous assessment but emphasize the importance of careful and balanced implementation of this system, taking into account the diversity of students' needs and preferences. Based on qualitative interpretation of data, the following recommendations emerge for improving the implementation of continuous assessment: Institutionalization of a model that combines continuous assessment (60–70 % of the grade) with final assessment (30–40 %), reflecting the preference of the majority of students and capitalizing on the complementary advantages of both forms. Implementation of an assessment coordination system between disciplines to prevent overlaps and ensure a balanced distribution of evaluative tasks throughout the semester. This could include a centralized calendar of major assessments and maximum limits for the number of assessments in a given week. Extension of the range of continuous assessment instruments to include structured periodic tests, group projects, and systematically evaluated homework, in addition to already used forms. This diversification would allow for accommodation of different learning styles and types of intelligence.

Investment in training teaching staff for offering constructive, specific, actionable, and prompt feedback. Feedback must go beyond simple numerical grading and offer clear guidance for improvement. Clear communication at the beginning of the semester of all assessment criteria, weights of each component, and expectations for each form of assessment. Use of detailed assessment rubrics that reduce perceived subjectivity. Integration into the academic calendar of periods without major assessments, in which students can consolidate knowledge, recover after intense efforts, and prevent exhaustion. These 'evaluative breaks' do not mean stopping learning but offering space for reflection and assimilation.

Offering programs and resources for developing time management competencies, stress management, and effective learning techniques. These interventions could be integrated into the psycho-pedagogical training program, having double benefit: support for students in the present and preparation for their future teaching career. Recognition that continuous assessment is not a universal solution and that certain disciplines or contexts may benefit from different models. Maintaining a degree of flexibility that allows adaptation to the specificity of the discipline, group size, and student characteristics.

The qualitative interpretation of collected data reveals a complex and nuanced reality of continuous assessment in higher education. Students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports demonstrate a mature understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of this system, recognizing both its pedagogical benefits and the practical challenges it generates. For future physical education

teachers, direct experience with various forms of assessment in their own academic course represents a valuable lesson that will inform and shape their future didactic practices. Deep understanding of the impact of different evaluative strategies on learning, motivation, and student well-being will contribute to the formation of reflective, empathetic, and effective teaching staff.

The uneven implementation of continuous assessment within the faculty, revealed by data, suggests the existence of structural and cultural obstacles that require attention at the institutional level. Transforming continuous assessment from a sporadic practice into a coherent and well-implemented system requires investment in resources, teacher training, inter-departmental coordination, and most importantly, commitment to continuous improvement based on student feedback.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Continuous assessment represents an essential pedagogical tool in contemporary higher education, contributing significantly to improving the quality of the educational process and to the development of students' competencies. The analysis presented in this article highlights both the substantial advantages of this approach and the challenges associated with its efficient implementation.

The main advantages of continuous assessment include: offering real-time information about the learning process, facilitating constant and constructive feedback, promoting long-term retention of knowledge, reducing anxiety associated with final assessments, and supporting a more inclusive character of education. These benefits are reflected both at the individual level, in the case of students, and at the institutional level, contributing to alignment with European standards and to ensuring the quality of educational programs.

However, implementation of continuous assessment also presents significant challenges, of which the most important are: considerable workload for teaching staff, risk of student overload through too frequent assessments, difficulties in ensuring uniformity and equity of assessment, and need for adequate resources, both human and technological. These challenges are more acute in the context of large classes and institutions with limited resources. International experience, especially within the European Higher Education Area, offers valuable lessons for effective implementation of continuous assessment. The Bologna Process has established a common framework for reforming higher education systems, but implementation varies significantly among countries, reflecting differences in resources, organizational culture, and political commitment. Implementation success depends essentially on institutional support, adequate preparation of teaching staff, and adaptation to the specific context of each institution. In the Romanian context, although there is a solid legislative and institutional framework for quality assurance in higher education, practical implementation of continuous assessment faces specific obstacles. To overcome these challenges and fully capitalize on the potential of continuous assessment, the following measures are recommended:

First, investment in continuous professional development of teaching staff is essential, with focus on competencies necessary for designing and implementing

continuous assessment, including digital competencies and abilities to offer constructive feedback. Second, institutions must ensure adequate resources for supporting continuous assessment, including modern technological platforms, support personnel, and reduction of class size where possible.

Third, adoption of innovative approaches to continuous assessment is recommended, such as methods based on self-reflection and meaningful learning, which have demonstrated promising results in recent research. These approaches can reduce student stress and promote deeper and more durable learning.

Fourth, development of an optimal balance between formative and summative assessment is necessary, ensuring that continuous assessment does not become a simple collection of grades but remains an authentic instrument for supporting learning. This involves careful planning of moments and forms of assessment, as well as clear communication with students about the purposes and benefits of each type of assessment.

Fifth, institutions should promote research and sharing of good practices in the field of continuous assessment, facilitating the exchange of experience between teaching staff and between institutions. Creation of communities of practice and organization of workshops and seminars dedicated to assessment can contribute significantly to improving competencies and to disseminating innovations in this field.

In conclusion, continuous assessment represents not only a requirement of European standards in higher education but also a real opportunity to improve the quality of education and to support the holistic development of students. The success of its implementation depends on the collective commitment of all actors involved - teaching staff, students, university management, and decision-makers at the national level - and on their capacity to overcome challenges through collaboration, innovation, and continuous investment in the development of the educational system.

## REFERENCES

1. Boud, D. (2013). *Enhancing learning through self-assessment*. Routledge.
2. Day, I.N.Z., van Blankenstein, F.M., Westenberg, P.M., & Admiraal, W.F. (2018). A review of the characteristics of intermediate assessment and their relationship with student grades. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(6), 908-929.
3. Gaebel, M., Purser, L., Wächter, B., & Wilson, L. (2008). Back to Bologna. The long road to European higher education reform. *EMBO Reports*, 9(2), 107-111.
4. Heritage, M. (2018). Assessment for learning as support for student self-regulation. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 45(1), 51-63.
5. Ismail, S.M., Ahmad, A.R., Ganapathy, M. & Mostafa, N.A. (2022). Formative assessment in higher education. A review. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 9(2), 1-10.
6. O'Connor, J. (2021). *The advantages of continuous assessment*. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/advantages-continuous-assessment-james-o-connor>

7. Pastor, V.M.L., & Manuel, M.P. (2012). Evaluación formativa y compartida en la universidad: Clarificación de conceptos y propuestas de intervención desde la Red Interuniversitaria de Evaluación Formativa. *Psychology, Society, & Education*, 4(1), 117-130.
8. Sotardi, V.A., & Dutton, E. (2022). A new approach to continuous assessment: Moving from a stressful sum of grades to meaningful learning through self-reflection. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 47(8), 1234-1248.
9. Vaessen, B.E., van den Beemt, A., & de Laat, M.F. (2017). Frequent assessment in higher education: Comparing a frequent assessment approach with a traditional assessment approach. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(7), 1095-1110.
10. \*\*\*Bologna Process. (1999). *The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999*. Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education.
11. \*\*\*Bologna Process. (2020). *The European Higher Education Area in 2020: Bologna Process Implementation Report*. European Commission.
12. \*\*\*Creatrix Campus. (2024). *The importance of continuous and comprehensive evaluation in higher education*. <https://www.creatrixcampus.com/blog/continuous-and-comprehensive-evaluation>
13. \*\*\*European Commission. (2024). *The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area*. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/bologna-process>
14. \*\*\*European Higher Education Area. (2024). *Employability of graduates*. <https://www.ehea.info/page-employability-of-graduates>
15. \*\*\*Eurydice. (2024). *Quality assurance in higher education - Romania*. European Commission. <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/romania/quality-assurance-higher-education>
16. \*\*\*International Journal of Sports and Exercise Medicine. (2022). *The effect of implementation of continuous assessment in practical and theoretical class for sport science students*. <https://clinmedjournals.org/articles/ijse-m/international-journal-of-sports-and-exercise-medicine-ijsem-8-222.php?jid=ijsem>
17. \*\*\*OECD. (2017). *Strengthening evaluation and assessment in Romania is key to educational reform*. <https://www.oecd.org/countries/romania/strengthening-evaluation-and-assessment-in-romania-is-key-to-educational-reform.htm>
18. \*\*\*Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). (2005). *Establishment and mission*. Ministry of Education, Romania.
19. \*\*\*UNESCO. (2017). *Continuous assessment for improved teaching and learning: A critical review to inform policy and practice*. UNESCO Digital Library. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000255511>
20. \*\*\*University of Timisoara. (2024). Digital assessment: A survey of Romanian higher education teachers' practices and needs. *Education Sciences*, 14(1), 32. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/14/1/32>