Writing Effective Assignments

A University Teaching Development Centre and Student Learning Support Services Workshop

Facilitated by
Dr Stephen Marshall (UTDC)
and Jan Stewart (SLSS)

Wednesday 12 May 2010

Wednesday, 19 May 2010
Agenda

This two hour workshop will help staff plan, design and implement effective assessments. It will cover identification of goals, techniques for assessment, and the communication of assessments to students in ways that promote their successful achievement of the goals.

Date: Wednesday, 12th May, 2010
Time: 1pm - 3pm
Venue: RWW129
Facilitated by: Dr Stephen Marshall,
University Teaching Development Centre &
Jan Stewart
Student Learning Support Services

• Welcome and objectives
• Clear Goals
• Adequate Preparation
• Appropriate Methods
• Significant Findings
• Effective Communication
• Reflective Critique
• In order to provide feedback and reasonable flexibility in dealing with students affected by adverse personal circumstances, the pattern of assessment should include several components spaced throughout the course. [1.2.C]

• Ideally, the assessment scheme should be designed with enough flexibility that a student who misses one item of assessment can still pass the course. [1.2.D]

• Assessment requirements for a course must be clearly specified in the course outline [1.2.E]

• No marks or grades may be scaled (or otherwise revised) downward after they have been released to students. [1.2.F]

• Clear information on the criteria for grading or marking each assessment item should be given to students before they undertake that item. [1.4.A]

• For each item of assessment, the course coordinator must provide markers with clear information on the criteria for grading or marking (for example, a marking guide). [1.4.B]

• Where possible, marked work should be returned to students with constructive feedback in time to be of use for future assessment items. [1.4.D]

• Peer assessment (assessment by one student of the work of another student enrolled in the same course) and self-assessment (assessment by a student of their own work in a course) may be used to assist student learning, but may not contribute directly towards the formal assessment determining a course grade. [1.6]

• Assessment based on group work shall not contribute more than 50% towards a student’s final grade unless the relevant Associate Dean has approved otherwise. [5.3]

• Group work may be assessed in such a way that all group members are assigned the same mark; that is called group assessment. […] group assessment may not contribute more than 15%. [5.4]
Designing Your Assessment

Clear Goals:
- What learning objective(s) will your assessment address?
- How does the assessment support student achievement of the Programme Learning Goals?
- What task, product or outcome is the goal of the assessment activity?

Adequate Preparation:
- How does this assessment relate to previous work undertaken by the students in this course and others?
- How should students practice/prepare themselves for the assessment activities?

Appropriate Methods:
- How will your assessment activities encourage students to expend their effort on those aspects that are most important?
- What should the students do to achieve the desired outcome of the assessment?
- How are the students scaffolded into the assessment activities?

Significant Findings:
- How will students know what quality of work is expected of them?
- What are the key elements that demonstrate student achievement in this assessment?

Effective Communication:
- How can students confirm they understand what is expected of them?

Reflective Critique:
- How are students going to receive formative feedback?
- How will you know if the assessment has been successful?
- Assurance of learning
Clear Goals

What learning objective(s) will your assessment address?
What task, product or outcome is the goal of the assessment activity?
How does the assessment support student achievement of the Programme Learning Goals
Backwards Design

**Identify desired results**

- What should students know, understand and be able to do?
- What is worthy of understanding?
- What enduring understandings are desired? Consider:
  - Goals
  - Graduate attributes
  - Teacher/student interests

**Determine acceptable evidence**

- How will we know if students have achieved the desired results and met the standards?
- What will we accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?
  - Consider a range of assessment methods

**Plan learning experiences and instruction**

- What enabling knowledge (facts, concepts or principles) and skills (procedures) will students need to perform effectively and achieve the desired results?
- What activities will equip students with the needed knowledge and skills?
- What materials and resources are best suited to accomplish the course goals?
- Is the overall design coherent and effective?

Adapted from Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J., 2005. *Understanding by Design. ASCD*
Why assess university learning?

Formative purposes
- To focus learners’ attention
- To illuminate and undermine misconceptions
- To increase motivation to learn
- To provide learners with feedback
- To improve performance
- To promote self-assessment & monitoring
- To develop independence

Summative purposes
- To sort learners
- To compare learners against each other
- To compare learning against criteria
- To certify competency
- To award qualifications

Evaluative purposes
- To determine teaching effectiveness
- To improve teaching programmes
- To certify teaching programmes
Programme Learning Goals

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<tr>
<th>Programme Learning Objectives (INFO)</th>
<th>Programme Learning Objectives (ELCM)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understand and manage the interplay between people, technologies and organisations that underpins information systems</td>
<td>Understand and manage the interplay between people, technologies and organisations that underpins e-business infrastructure</td>
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<td>Demonstrate a sound understanding of IT and related organisational processes</td>
<td>Develop, test, deploy, maintain and measure e-business strategies, systems, processes and applications for an organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyse, design, develop, test, implement and maintain information systems, processes and applications for an organisation</td>
<td>Exploit new business models and marketplace structures enabled by electronic communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploit opportunities created by technology</td>
<td>Communicate the technical and managerial aspects of e-business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate the technical and managerial aspects of information systems</td>
<td>Understand and control IT risks and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the impact of IT on either social, economic, legal or ethical issues in organisations and society</td>
<td>Explain the impact of e-business on either social, economic, legal or ethical issues in organisations and society</td>
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Adequate Preparation

How does this assessment relate to previous work undertaken by the students in this course and others? How should students practice/prepare themselves for the assessment activities?
Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle

Concrete Experience

Testing in New Situations

Forming Abstract Concepts

Observation and Reflection

Ako
IBUS201 LO1: apply the concepts and terminology commonly used in IB

Lecture peer assessed test

BCA Core

First tutorial

Lecture: Interpretation exercise
Tutorial 2: Identification exercise
Tutorial 3: Analysis exercise
Tutorial 4: Creative and Critical exercise

Tutorial 5: Application exercise
Own portfolios for summative assmt

Learning Objective A

Summative Feedback

Learning Objective B → Prior Knowledge and Experience → Learning Experiences → Assessment Activities → Achievement of LO, MA, LG

Formative Feedback

Learning Objective C
Appropriate Methods

How will your assessment activities encourage students to expend their effort on those aspects that are most important?
What should the students do to achieve the desired outcome of the assessment?
How are the students scaffolded into the assessment activities?
What are the key principles of effective assessment?

List 5-7 key principles of effective assessment below:

____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

What was the most effective assessment you’ve ever experienced?

____________________________________________

What was the least?

____________________________________________

What differences made the most difference?

____________________________________________
Effective assessments are ...

- Fair: Use common language and examples equally familiar to those undergoing the assessment
- Valid: Assess what the learning goal/objective specifies
- Predictive: Predict relevant future behaviour accurately
- Reliable: Elicit consistent performance from those responding and those evaluating them
- Fit for purpose: Provide enough and strong enough evidence to support judgements or decisions made
- Secure: Ensure academic integrity
- Timely and current
- Relevant: To real world performance demands in that discipline/field
- Educative: Preparing for and doing the assessments leads to the desired learning
- Practical to administer, mark and grade
Assessment Activities (Gibbs 1988)

Planning for Experience
- Action plans
- Setting objectives
- Designing experiments
- Observation checklists
- Devising criteria
- Learning contracts
- Action research

Increasing Awareness of Experience
- Log books
- Listening exercises
- Questions
- Increasing awareness of feelings
- Silent demonstrations

Reviewing and Reflecting on Experience
- Diaries
- Using video and audio recordings
- Peer appraisal
- Structured discussions
- Structured de-briefing
- Self assessment
- Reflection checklists and questionnaires
  ‘Shared time’ and ‘mutual interviewing’
- Modelling reflection

Providing Substitute Experiences
- Case studies
- Games
- Simulations
- Role plays
- Assessing through substitute experiences
Writing Good Essay/Assignment Questions

Is your question:

• clearly related to the objectives and learning outcomes that are stated in your course outline?
• assessing what you want it to assess?
• appropriately stepped or scaffolded for the level of class being assessed?
• written so that the task is very clear and not open to misinterpretation?
• free of culturally or gender-biased examples?
• written concisely in plain English and free of colloquialisms and acronyms?
• peer reviewed and trialled on students?
• accompanied by a marking schedule?
• justified in terms of appropriate reading material? (Not all students will have the same cultural capital and some groups may need to source background material)
• evaluated and revised after marking has been completed?

This list was created by Karen Commons, SLSS, 27 April 2005
Guidelines for Writing Good Multiple Choice Items

1. Keep items concise.
2. Define key terms. Define what you mean by “usually” or “largest”.
3. Don’t create a vocabulary or reading test unless you want one.
4. Avoid common knowledge questions.
5. Don’t create “connected” or “follow on” questions.
6. Write stems as complete questions or statements.
7. Avoid negative words in the item.
8. Avoid laundry lists: All/none of the above, which of the following, etc.
9. Avoid grammatical or repeated word clues.
10. Create no more than three to four response options.
11. Make all response options the same length.
12. Line up response options vertically, not horizontally.
13. Use plausible distracters in every case.
14. Use diagnostic distracters when possible.
15. Avoid trick questions.

Overall:
Write items that knowledgeable students will answer correctly.
Write items that less prepared students will not guess correctly.
Significant Findings

How will students know what quality of work is expected of them?
What are the key elements that demonstrate student achievement in this assessment?
A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy
(From Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

CREATE
Generate, Plan, Synthesize, Produce the New

EVALUATE
Critique or Judge based on Explicit Standards/Criteria

ANALYZE
Break Down, Relate Parts & Whole, Organize

APPLY
Follow Procedures to Solve Problems or Carry Out Tasks

UNDERSTAND
Connect New Learning to Prior Knowledge by Interpreting, Classifying, Comparing, Summarizing, etc.

REMEMBER
Elaborate, Encode, and Retrieve Information from Long-term Memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubrics</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Not Satisfactory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure and style:</strong> Document, paragraph and sentence structure, flow and layout, appropriate to audience.</td>
<td>Variety of sentence construction; logical flow; style and structure appropriate for task, audience and genre. Uses engaging delivery that enhances understanding. Thoughtful presentation.</td>
<td>Not overly repetitive; some variety in sentence construction; generally flows well; some awareness of audience and genre.</td>
<td>Overly repetitive or simplistic sentence structure; consistently disjointed, lack of flow; style/structure inappropriate for audience.</td>
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<td><strong>Clarity and conciseness:</strong> Answers the question, succinct, appropriate complexity.</td>
<td>Argument effectively and efficiently conveyed; highly focused on the question; easily understood.</td>
<td>Argument reasonably clear; occasionally misses the point but answers the question; not over-elaborate or over-complicated.</td>
<td>Main point and/or argument confused/unclear. Irrelevant information, no transition between ideas. Unclear conclusion.</td>
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<td><strong>Technical writing skills:</strong> Spelling, capitalisation, punctuation, grammar, general proofreading.</td>
<td>Very few spelling errors, correct punctuation, grammatically correct, complete sentences.</td>
<td>Occasional lapses in spelling, punctuation, grammar, but not enough to seriously distract the reader.</td>
<td>Numerous spelling errors, non-existent or incorrect punctuation, and/or severe errors in grammar that interfere with understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary:</strong> Originality, breadth, appropriateness, variety.</td>
<td>Highly appropriate, well chosen, precise and varied vocabulary. Consistently uses correct word choice and discipline-specific terminology.</td>
<td>Generally appropriate vocabulary; not overly repetitive. Generally uses correct word choice and discipline-specific terminology.</td>
<td>Excessively limited or inappropriate or repetitive vocabulary. Misuses discipline-specific terminology.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Integrity:</strong> Appropriate use of references.</td>
<td>Appropriate use of others’ work, acknowledged via in-text citations. Uses APA (or accepted alternative) referencing system consistently and correctly.</td>
<td>Other sources acknowledged. Generally uses APA (or accepted alternative) referencing system.</td>
<td>Unattributed work from other sources. 1 Does not attempt to use APA (or accepted alternative2) referencing system.</td>
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<td><strong>Holistic judgement:</strong></td>
<td>Exemplary written communication.</td>
<td>Satisfactory written communication.</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory written communication.</td>
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1 Note that Plagiarism will cause the entire document to be “Unsatisfactory” regardless of quality of remaining parts.  
2 APA is FCA standard. Occasionally lecturers may allow other referencing systems, providing guidance as needed.
Effective Communication

How can students confirm they understand what is expected of them?
Why Give Learners Feedback?

- To improve performance and academic success
- To increase trust and motivation to learn
- To illuminate and undermine misconceptions
- To promote self-assessment
- To develop independence

The order in which we give feedback matters. Consider the following five steps:

1st – Good News: What was done well
2nd – Bad News: What still needs improvement
3rd – Options: What can be done to improve it
4th – Plans: What the learner intends to do
5th – Commitments: What both parties agree to do, how, to what standard, and by when.
Reflective Critique

How are students going to receive formative feedback?
How will you know if the assessment has been successful?
Assurance of Learning
## Assurance of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Structure and Style</th>
<th>Clarity &amp; conciseness</th>
<th>Technical writing skills</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Academic Integrity</th>
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<th>Overall grade if known</th>
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Assessors comments:
Applications Card

DIRECTIONS: Please take a moment to recall the ideas, techniques, and strategies we've discussed—and those you've thought up—to this point in the session. Quickly list as many possible applications as you can. Don't censor yourself! These are merely possibilities. You can always re-evaluate the usefulness of these ideas later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interesting IDEAS/TECHNIQUES from this session</th>
<th>Some possible APPLICATIONS of those ideas/techniques to my work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Wednesday, 19 May 2010
A Few Key References on Assessment


Designing Your Assessment

Clear Goals:

Adequate Preparation:

Appropriate Methods:

Significant Findings:

Effective Communication:

Reflective Critique: