

Challenge accepted! Re-assessing assessment in 2020
CAULLT Conference, 12 November 2020

Chair: Professor Jillian Hamilton
Vice President, CAULLT

COVID-19 has presented many challenges to learning and teaching, but perhaps the greatest disruption has been to the assessment of learning. Traditional assessment practices that require on-campus attendance have been reimagined. For some, the constraints of COVID have provided a catalyst for radical innovation in assessment.

Submissions were invited to this session. Colleagues from across the sector present how they transformed assessment during 2020. This includes presentations on *leading and supporting assessment transformation*, as well as *exemplars of good practice in redesigned assessment* during COVID-19.

Sonia Saluja, Head of Course (Medical Science), School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences and Helen Keen-Dyer, Academic Lead, learning and Teaching, School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences
CQUniversity

Flipping the switch: disruption as a catalyst for enhancing collaboration and quality

COVID-19 disrupted many of the historical ways of operating in higher education. For the Medical Sciences team at CQUniversity Australia, that meant a change to longstanding assessment practices and the corresponding challenge of shifting focus to issues of quality and good practice in the development of online assessments. To support this change, the Head of Medical Science initiated a collaborative approach which incorporated a peer review quality assurance process based on a staff buddy system. The quality assurance approach was based on a structural framework that included: (1) a set of agreed timelines for the review, feedback and revision of the alternative assessment; and (2) a list of focus areas considered essential to quality assessment instruments, including alignment to learning outcomes, academic integrity, question quality, alignment to year level and student experience (QAA, 2020). While individual unit coordinators were responsible for the mechanics and enactment of the alternative assessment instrument, importantly, they had the broader support of the team and the specific support of a buddy, who was one of two team members to review their proposed instrument.

An evaluation of the CQUniversity Australia Medical Sciences approach holds great promise for understanding how collaboration can support agile responses to disruptive events and the processes and tools that enhance quality within such collaborative activity. The emergent lessons highlight the immediate value experienced by the academic responsible for the assessment re-design, through to the transformative value in the form of supported staff and assessments instruments that meet quality requirements.

References:

QAA (2020). Preserving quality and standards through a time of rapid change: UK Higher Education in 2020-21. Available at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/support-and-guidance-covid-19>

Dr Jessey Lee
Science, Engineering & Technology
Swinburne University of Technology

Authentic hands-on assessment with a fun twist

To ensure that our bridges of the future do not fall down, Dr Jessey Lee from Swinburne University of Technology talks about how she has transformed her final assessment for a first-year core engineering unit from a 50% weighted, three-hours written exam into to a semester long LEGO-Masters inspired hands-on authentic final assessment activity.

Due to COVID-19 disruption and rigid lockdown rules in Victoria, rather than students using specialist equipment or resources in the lab, a unique assessment approach was adopted where students conduct research on existing bridges before constructing their own 'home-made' bridge. Students were given a design brief to construct a bridge with minimum span of 50cm to hold at least 1 kg of load made from easy to access at home materials unique to each individual. In addition, students conduct peer review of their colleague's work emulating value engineering practice. Finally, each student prepares a video presentation demonstrating the load test on their bridge and reflecting on ways to improve their design.

The challenges from COVID disruption served as a catalyst to revamp the traditional invigilated exam for this unit into an engaging and fun hands-on learning activity while addressing the unit's key learning outcomes. Students rose above and beyond the challenge with a record breaking do-it-yourself bridge carrying over 170kg!

Dr Janet Dutton
Master of Teaching (Primary & Secondary), Macquarie School of Education
Macquarie University

Reimagining a 'Mantle of the Expert' Viva Voce for the Zoom environment

COVID sent this face-to-face Viva Voce online into a Zoom environment and students and academics were both relieved and thrilled by the reimagining of the assessment task. Utilising the a 'Mantle of the Expert' (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994; Heathcote & Herbert, 1985) teaching system, this assessment as learning task positioned 1st year Master of Teaching students in role as expert classroom teachers speaking to their Principal about a classroom management dilemma they had managed. The 'Mantle of the Expert' approach places the student at the centre of learning with the facilitator's role being to create the conditions whereby a mantle of leadership, knowledge, competency and understanding grows around the student during the task (Aitken, 2014).

Happily, the online iteration not only maintained the task's capacity to build and demonstrate students' knowledge of classroom management, oracy and reflexivity, but the implementation of a self-managed student Zoom booking system also enhanced student agency and developed organisational skills relevant to professional practice. Furthermore, the readily available meeting recordings facilitated task moderation and will allow excerpts to be employed as a teaching resource and peer evaluation in subsequent units.

References:

Aitken, B. (2014). From teacher-in-role to researcher-in-role: possibilities for repositioning children through role-based strategies in classroom research, *Research in drama education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. 19(3), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2014.928005>

Heathcote, D., & Bolton, G. (1994). *Drama for learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert approach to education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Press.

Heathcote, D., & Herbert, P. (1985). A drama of learning: Mantle of the expert, *Theory into Practice*, 24(3), 173-180.

Associate Professor Leonie Short
Bachelor of Oral Health Course
CQUniversity

Reach, like and share – a transformational experience in oral health education

Oral health academics worked to reassess and reimagine andragogy during the COVID-19 Pandemic. As students could not develop lesson plans and deliver traditional education off-campus, we needed to be innovative in what other skills they could develop and utilise.

Consequently, Year 3 Bachelor of Oral Health students were asked to develop oral health messages that were posted in the CQUniversity's Health Clinics Facebook page and/or emailed to thousands of CQUniversity staff, students, and clinic patients.

We were also challenged to design a new assessment rubric for OHE via social media which contains the domains of professionalism, communication, and oral health content. This assessment contributed to the students' final mark and grade for an 18 CP unit.

Students demonstrated skills in social media communication; and their messages needed to comply and adhere to professional, marketing, academic, regulatory, and ethical policies relevant to practice of dentistry.

The oral health posts have achieved a reach of 330 to 3,010, with engagement scores of 10 to 363, likes from 6 to 68 and shares from 0 to 56.

The COVID-19 pandemic inspired us as academics and dental practitioners to create a transformational experience for us and, more importantly, for our students. The students excelled in developing OHE material in this new format and will be able to use these skills as graduate oral health therapists.

This exemplar in redesigned assessment features as a case study of learning and teaching good practice in Australia on the TEQSA website under Student Experience – Online learning good practice.

Dr Lynn Gribble and Dr Janis Wardrop
School of Management, UNSW Business School
UNSW

Reimagining group work

The shift to online learning, as a result of the global pandemic, has provided opportunities to reimagine how group work can be conducted between students who are unlikely to meet face to face. We teach a large compulsory core course in a master's program (>500 students) attracting mainly international students. One of the core outcomes for this course is to develop the professional skill of collaboration through group work. Once the teams are formed, traditionally the work of the group is largely performed 'outside of class time' and is invisible to the teaching team until the assignment is submitted. Often it is only at this point that we are made aware of problems in team dynamics and contributions of individual students. At the same time much has been written about the impact of the shift to online learning and the sense of isolation and poor motivation of students. Given this, a new project support structure has been designed and implemented as a means of 'real time' observation of the work being done whereby students use Moodle 'wiki' spaces to develop and produce their final reports.

A timetable of activities is also provided as part of the assessment instructions, and to date 74% of students are posting their progress and adhering to the suggested timeline. The system collects data on individual contributions enabling us to monitor and reach out to students have not accessed resources or who have started but demonstrate low engagement with the task early in the assessment cycle.

Meg McInnes
Paramedicine in VU First Year College
Victoria University

Mastering the art of writing academic essay assessment using interactive tools in the challenge of the Covid-19 environment

Meg teaches in the first year of the VU Block Model and outlines the challenges of working with students who enter Higher Education with varying degrees of cultural and educational capital. She highlights the challenges of mastering the art of writing academic essays and demonstrates how she designed a curriculum that guides students through the challenges of writing an academic essay by breaking the task down into multiple, achievable components. Meg highlights how she leveraged the affordances of the LMS and utilised a range of interactive tools such as H5P to engage students and demonstrate the linking together of elements.

This was a challenge in the Covid-19 environment and required significant focus and care.

Maurizio Manuguerra¹ (presenter), David Bulger², Natalie Spence³
Assessment for learning: Re-takeable personalised tests at cognitive levels
Department of Mathematics and Statistics^{1&2} & Learning and Teaching Team³
Macquarie University

Assessment for learning: Re-takeable personalised tests at cognitive levels

Learning statistics requires consistent work on problems to build skills and knowledge. However, novice students do not necessarily know how to commit appropriate effort for mastery and can be discouraged if they attempt advanced problems without an appropriate knowledge base.

Last semester, we introduced re-takeable personalised quiz tests for the five topics in our large introductory statistics unit and removed mid-session and final exams. The tests were aligned with levels of cognition: each topic included a test at pass level (Revised Bloom's Taxonomy level of

‘understand’) and a test with questions at higher levels (‘apply,’ ‘analyse,’ and ‘evaluate’) to determine the remainder of the grade for each topic. The higher-level test was only released to a student with full marks in the corresponding pass test. Students had unlimited practice tests and three opportunities to take each graded test.

Discussion forums (no required participation) had over 1500 posts as students worked to understand problems. Practice tests showed >40 attempts/student. Final grades were excellent: fail rate did not vary from previous units (~12%), but higher grades were boosted, with 70% scoring a D or HD (<50% previously). In corroboration of the results, the quality of assignments of co-taught post-graduate students markedly improved upon previous years.

Questions and data sets for statistical scenarios were generated using R and imported to Moodle to produce the high number of tests. This semester, each topic has three tests at increasing levels of difficulty. Preparatory work was significant but reduced marking costs and increased levels of learning.

Caroline E. Schuster
School of Archaeology and Anthropology
ANU

Book Clubs: feminist approaches to team-based remote learning assessments

More than anything else, students have expressed their disappointment over losing the chance to socialise with their classmates due to COVID-safe restrictions. This semester, I set out to develop assessments that would create opportunities for dynamic group engagement, and that could fill the gap of face-to-face interaction. The design of “book clubs” to discuss a pre-selected text aimed to create student-led social and emotional support groups while also deepening their engagement with the course material. Groups were tasked with self-organising their meetings and creating a communication platform for their club (email, Messenger, WhatsApp, Discord, etc.). Each book club was tasked with audio-recording four short analyses of the book that responded to specific prompts. In other words, the final output built upon the interactive and dialogue-based nature of the teams and incorporated that skill into the assessment.

The “book clubs” manifest feminist pedagogy in three ways. First, the project engages deep listening at every stage, from attending to the multiple voices expressed in the text itself (an ethnography of queer intimacy), to listening closely to one’s team-mates in discussion, to collaborating on an audio production. Second, the book clubs draw on a long tradition of feminist movement politics organised around consciousness raising through dialogue. Finally, an individual reflective essay invites students to assess their engagement with the collective and discuss the book club’s transformative capacity. Given the deeply gendered effects of COVID19, it is now more urgent than ever to develop feminist teaching tools.

Ingrid Christiansen
Medical Science/DL - Pathology
School of Health, Medical and Applied Sciences
CQUniversity

Rethinking Authentic Examinations: Implementation of Oral Assessments in Medical Sciences

CQU has relied on the use of invigilated written examinations to assess students to help maximise academic integrity. However, written examinations are not always reflective of a vocational environment nor simulate collaborative troubleshooting.

An approach to broaden the scope of authentic alternative assessments was catalysed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Oral assessments have traditionally been delivered in a face-to-face mode, but not often via internet conferencing software. Two units in CQUniversity's Medical Science courses saw the implementation of oral assessments via Zoom in 2020 (to replace invigilated examinations) while maintaining alignment with the unit learning outcomes. Unit coordinators were invited to attend a workshop provided by Griffith university, and developed the new oral assessments under consultation with both staff and students. The use of internet conferencing software allows for maintaining academic integrity via:

- Authenticity
- Minimal collusion and
- Minimal plagiarism (with tailored questions to each individual assessment).

The students were able to rehearse their oral assessments with their unit coordinator and asked to complete a survey following. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, with the intention to reuse in further iterations of the units. The survey results showed that many of the students preferred the change in assessment style. Rather than a written examination, they were able to verbally communicate their understanding of the material, and have a conversation with the marker simulating a vocational scenario. There was also a higher level of engagement between staff and students.

Through self-reflection, survey results, unit feedback responses and team meetings, the unit coordinators have contemplated a permanent change to these units with minor adaptations in future offerings.

Christine Connelly
Environmental Science, College of Engineering and Science
Victoria University

Bringing the bush online: Virtual field trips for environmental science students

As a result of the tectonic impact of Covid-19, VU staff moved quickly to find new ways to support their students' learning. As physical doors closed, they accelerated the adoption of digital technologies to build capability and engagement with our student cohort. At VU, we realised that the flexibility of Block Mode made it possible for us to adapt quickly. Using technology and resourceful thinking, VU staff have continued to find ways to support our students; ensuring they receive a quality and engaging education experience through VU's digitally supported remote learning model.

In this presentation, Christine Connelly discusses how she adapted a practical unit which required students to visit grasslands, woodland, and coastal ecosystems to digitally supported remote learning and assessment. She said, "It was key to try provide students with practical experiences and make the assessment as authentic as possible, I think we've achieved that really well."