

Assessing Students using Student Decided Assessment Medium

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A decorative graphic consisting of several horizontal lines of varying lengths and colors (teal, white, and light blue) extending from the right side of the slide towards the center.

The Problem...

Like many lecturers, I tend to see most students regarding an assignment when they had failed and had to re-submit. When questioned about their work, students would display a level of knowledge that should have meant that they pass the module.

So why did they fail?

It became apparent that whilst these students had the theoretical knowledge, they lacked the ability to ***write it down***.

Therefore the assessment of my module was not only an assessment of their knowledge but also of their literary skills, skills that were not taught within the module nor were the focus of the assessment.

Three points to consider

Brown (1999) said that any assessment “*should be fit for purpose*” and highlights that assessments should be mindful of the students capabilities.

Gibbs (2006) has the strong belief that students learn more through assessment than through teaching.

Sambell *et al* (2006) discuss how in recent years the student population has dramatically grown not just in numbers but also in their idiosyncratic ways of learning.

These three points demonstrate that

- Assessment must be focused on the student
- Assessment is a key element to learning
- Student learning styles are diverse

Thus the blanket setting of one assessment method may disadvantage many students.

Brown (1999) found that internationally students are assessed through set written work in around 80% of all cases.

Why this limited choice though?

Custom and practice?

Lecturers scared of devolving power?

The solution...

- to allow students to decide on the manner in which they are assessed.

Individually.

Students were given a choice of how they were to be assessed-

- Written assignment 1
- Written assignment 2
- Written assignment 3
- Unseen exam
- Viva presentation

The results

Overall pass rate of **83%** (up from 44%)

- Exam pass rate of **100%**
- Viva pass rate of **100%**

A study was carried out into this by surveying students through questionnaires and interviews.

It was found that students:

- Greatly appreciated being given a choice
- Wanted the choices reduced to three
- Wanted more 'structured' guidance
- Wanted to be assessed in the room that they were taught in.
- Experienced less stress

After implementing changes, after four years the pass rate stood at **89%** and until last year, the exam and viva options had a 100% pass rate for the BSc programme.

Possible reasons for the improved pass rates

1. Students could play on their strengths – put simply, students could demonstrate their knowledge in a way that best suited them, not me.

Possible reasons for the improved pass rates

2. It acknowledges that students are adults and appreciate being given a choice. This acts as a great motivational factor.
3. The greater guidance allows the students to see exactly what was required of them, allowing them to make a fully informed choice.

Overall, this study found that by increasing student autonomy, pass rates can dramatically increase with a reduction in stress levels.

References

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Questions?
Comments?
Compliments!

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