

## Online Assessment Makes a Difference

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide practical reference which will help reluctant language teachers to select, develop, implement, evaluate and adopt online assessment to suit their specific curriculum needs.

There are many reasons to move from pen and paper to online assessment. One of the most significant is the increasing use of information and communication technologies to enhance learning. A well-planned course should measure the extent to which students have fulfilled its objectives. Online assessment can serve as a valuable approach in determining students' progress towards definite goals, as well as giving teachers a clear insight into their own effectiveness.

It is therefore important to know where to start. At least three guiding principles should be considered. These are: to start with clear educational objectives, to start small and to start where success is most likely. Unless carefully planned, online assessment can encourage students to focus on lower level cognitive skills if it concentrates primarily and only on true/false or multiple choice responses. Assessment tasks should broaden the range of skills assessed and provide students with better feedback on their progress. Tasks should meet students' expectations for a more flexible approach to learning and testing.

Naturally, the move to online and computer based assessment inevitably means that the staff involved in such initiatives faces a large number of technical and educational decisions. However, in a climate of ever increasing academic workloads, online assessment may help to tackle large volumes of marking and assessment administration more efficiently.

As we rush headlong into the future, it is difficult to imagine our daily routines without computers and the Internet. ICTs have opened up huge opportunities for transforming the role and practice of assessment in higher education and therefore careful consideration should be given to its full potentials.