
Dethroning the Essay

Institution: Bath Spa University

Primary Contacts: Rebecca Feasey and James Baggot Brown

Discipline / subject: Media and Critical Studies

Academic level: Undergraduate

Our innovation:

As a response to a School restructure, the desire for more inclusive approaches to assessments, a commitment to graduate outcomes and the opportunities afforded by becoming an Adobe Creative Campus, the Media and Critical Studies teams worked to dethrone the essay. We looked to replace traditional essay writing in favour of portfolio-based work that was able to offer a bespoke package of assignments to our students. The new portfolios incorporated promotional posters and activism campaign materials, zines and journalistic writing, exhibitions and augmented reality trails, podcasts and photo books.

How we measured efficacy:

Staff are energised, excited to support students through an innovative and authentic set of assignments, spanning diverse media forms, formats and themes. Likewise, student feedback through each stage of the project has been positive, and early indicators suggests that the numbers of assessment extensions, non-submissions and failed items have each declined.

Reflecting industry through the use of an interview assessment**Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University****Primary Contact: Joanne Banbrick****Discipline / subject: Banking and Finance****Academic level: Final year undergraduate****Our innovation:**

An authentic assessment was undertaken with students being the interviewer rather than the interviewee, to reflect the Financial Planning Industry. The students interviewed two tutors as their clients. Preparation was required for both the tutors as the clients and the students, including how we equipped students with the necessary skills to perform the interview; the role playing required by the tutors who were going to be interviewed and how the actual interview was conducted. Marking, and moderation took place simultaneously due to the presence of two tutors.

How we measured efficacy:

The efficacy of this type of assessment was shown in the results, there was a significant level of high scores with 89% of students receiving good honours in 2022-23, compared to 61% in 2021-22, which used a more traditional form of assessment and outperformed the average across the university for good honours. We also saw 100% attendance at the interview from all students.

Process folio for becoming and belonging

Institution: King's College London

Primary Contacts: Jayne Pearson and Flora Smyth Zahra

Discipline / subject: Dental Science and Dental Hygiene Therapy

Academic level: Undergraduate (all years)

Our innovation:

Dental students depict their journey of professional identity through a folio consisting of multimedia artefacts and reflective commentary as part of an interdisciplinary Clinical Humanities module. It aims to assess General Dental Council outcomes around tolerance of ambiguity, self-care and the inculcation of professional behaviours as part of its [safe practitioner framework](#). Originating from Arts assessment, process folio is an innovative and disruptive method of assessment, scaffolding students to truly inculcate professional behaviours as identity formation, going beyond instrumental reflection and focusing on reflexivity of the interaction between self and society.

How we measured efficacy:

The effectiveness of the assessment is measured via:

- + longitudinal outcomes (individual student performance on the assessment over the 3 years with similar criteria);
- + student reactions, such as module evaluation scores and Padlet feedback;
- + qualitative analysis of folio submissions;
- + learner analytics of engagement with activities such as forum discussion posts.

We also intend to assess students against new GDC competences next year.

Using a blog assessment to enhance employability and digital skills**Institution:** University of Liverpool**Primary Contact:** Maria Limniou**Discipline / subject:** Psychology**Academic level:** Final year undergraduate**Our innovation:**

A third-year assessment allows psychology students to work both independently by creating their own blog space and collaboratively by exchanging views on cyberpsychology topics. Students create their web blog (i.e., WordPress) critiquing a target research article making it suitable for a non-specialist audience. Their blog also includes an 'About me' page through which students present themselves to potential employers. Students should share their web blog with the whole class through an internal online discussion forum and each student comments on others' blogs. Through this assessment, the whole class reflects their knowledge, debates on topics, and exchanges ideas on various interdisciplinary topics improving their employability and digital skills.

How we measured efficacy:

Both the number of comments on different topics and the quality of students' comments on each topic through the online discussion forum indicate student engagement with their assessment and learning. Students also use their blogs after their studies to support their job hunting.

Additional links or resources:

A sample of the student work on the Cyberpsychology LinkedIn page:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cyberpsyc-uol/>

Articulating skills via a job interview assessment**Institution: University of Chester****Primary Contact: Andrea Todd****Discipline / subject: Law****Academic level: Final year undergraduate****Our innovation:**

Via six workshops, students identify and articulate the skills and attributes they possess for a junior legal role. They dissect job specifications, present to, and receive feedback from, their peers on the attributes and skills they possess, and reflect on the skills they need to improve. Formative assessment is via www.shortlist.me, enabling students to record their responses, receive AI-generated feedback on pace and fluency, and view recorded feedback on what was expected from each question.

How we measured efficacy:

Student survey feedback demonstrates this approach enhances confidence and employability. Example student comments:

- + 'We've been taught self-reflection - I can better assess whether I possess skills advertised for a position.'
- + 'I can now articulate how I would be an asset to a firm.'
- + 'Feedback improved my answers and boosted my confidence.'
- + 'It has increased the [number] of interviews I have got.'
- + 'The assessment questions were a mirror image of [my] assessment centre'.

Embedding employability in an undergraduate research project

Institution: University of Nottingham

Primary Contact: Stephanie McDonald

Discipline / subject: Psychology

Academic level: Final year undergraduate

Our innovation:

As part of their psychology undergraduate research project, students prepare a research project portfolio, incorporating:

- (a) a project report of their study;
- (b) a reflective account of their project experience;
- (c) a skills audit, reflecting on key competencies and articulating how they have demonstrated these competencies in their project work; and
- (d) a conduct of project, where students demonstrate engagement in supervision meetings and relevant training sessions.

A set of training sessions and resources have been developed to support students with aspects of their project work (e.g., project management, working with their supervisor, using specialist software, teamwork) and the assessment (e.g., reflection and reflective writing), and to further support project supervisors in the supervision process.

How we measured efficacy:

Student focus groups, a student survey, and analyses of students' reflective accounts and skills audit demonstrate evidence of positive impact on students' skills development (eg. reflection, project management) and confidence in undertaking and completing their project work.

Reflective portfolios as a core assessment in Physics

Institution: University of Sheffield

Primary Contact: Matt Mears

Discipline / subject: Physics

Academic levels: Years 1 and 2 Undergraduate

Our innovation:

We recognised that providing students with a framework to reflect on their learning and their experiences, in parallel with workshops on skills development and in reflecting practice, would build a more developed and rounded graduate. Assessment was re-designed to allow students to write a portfolio against three domains:

1. Theoretical understanding, assessed through homework that must be passed but can be resubmitted following feedback.
2. Laboratory competence, assessed through lab diary and one-to-one discussions with staff about challenges and approaches to overcoming these.
3. Reflective essays, drawing on feedback received on their learning in conjunction with employability goals and graduate attribute framework.

Portfolios are double assessed, once by academic tutors who provide the long-term academic support for students during their studies, and once by our employability lead.

How we measured efficacy:

The assessment itself was pass-fail, but in the five years it has been embedded we have seen our graduate outcomes and student confidence increase significantly when it comes to applying for and securing jobs or PhDs after they graduate.

Using argument mapping to demonstrate critical thinking

Institution: University of East Anglia

Primary Contact: David Holland

Discipline / subject: Psychology

Academic level: First year undergraduate

Our innovation:

Based on an analysis of marked work, there was a clear room for added value in argument development and signposting. The students augment an essay involving argument with an appendix which contains an 'argument map' (a visualisation of the argument they are building). This work is underpinned by a series of teaching sessions on critical thinking in which they develop and practice the argument mapping skills culminating in a peer feedback formative. The aim here is to build various competencies in the first year of study that raise academic standards and performance throughout the degree.

How we measured efficacy:

Students showed high levels of engagement with the argument mapping sessions and section of the assignment, while and feedback comments indicated they took this part of the assignment seriously and perceived them as valuable and fundamental to their assessment performance. A feedback analysis based on rubrics showed a marked improvement in evaluations of students' argument.

Additional links or resources:

A landmark paper in this area demonstrating the efficacy of this approach:

Cullen, S, Fan, J, van der Brugge, E (2018) 'Improving analytical reasoning and argument understanding: a quasi-experimental field study of argument visualization'. *Science Learn* 3(21) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-018-0038-5>

Use of student-led workshops – diversifying approaches to assessment**Institution: University of Westminster****Primary Contact: Stephen Bunbury****Discipline / subject: Law****Academic level: Final year undergraduate****Our innovation:**

Students lead a workshop as part of their summative assessment (40% of the overall mark) for the Disability Law module. This in turn has improved students' performance overall in the Disability Law module. Students are free to use a variety of methods of delivery. Competencies are assessed during the second semester. Students are required to deliver a live solo or joint workshop using various interactive activities such as role play, use of technology, buzz groups, recordings, small group working and other creative forms.

How we measured efficacy:

I led a student partnership project and obtained qualitative feedback from students and produced an internal report. Focus groups and interviews were used to obtain feedback and data on the usefulness and efficacy of the use of student-led workshops in diversifying innovative assessment practices.

Additional links or resources:

https://blog.westminster.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/61/2023/01/Student_Led-Workshops_cocreators.pdf

Five-Stage Formative Assessment

Institution: University of Surrey

Primary Contact: Emily Finch

Discipline / subject: Law

Academic level: Final Year Undergraduate

Our innovation:

The formative assessment task (an evaluative essay) was divided into five separate tasks:

1. finding a line of argument and writing an introduction;
2. writing a foundational paragraph;
3. conducting research and developing the first strand of the argument;
4. expanding the line of argument and incorporating authority;
5. polishing the essay and writing the conclusion.

There was a briefing on each task at the start of the day and a dedicated forum in which students could ask questions about the task. It was submitted at the end of the day and written feedback was provided before the next task was released. This format was followed for all five stages at the end of which students submitted a complete essay based upon the revisions made to the five components and were given final verbal feedback in a one-to-one meeting.

How we measured efficacy:

Engagement with this form of formative assessment was significantly improved. Satisfaction with assessment and feedback in the end-of-module evaluation was 100%. There was a noticeable upturn in marks in the summative assessment and the quality of essays submitted were significantly improved from the previous work done by the same students.

Workplace learning in Social Sciences

Institution: University of Aberdeen

Primary Contacts: Stuart Durkin and Joy Perkins

Discipline / subject: Politics & International Relations, Sociology and Anthropology

Academic level: Penultimate year undergraduates

Our innovation:

We run a 30-credit elective module, 'Employer-led Interdisciplinary Project'. The module combines employability development learning workshops with a 'virtual project' hosted by a micro-business. In the module, one of the summative assessments involves devising a professional letter to the School Director of Education. This assessment requires students to reflect on their module learning, how the module is helping to shape their career thinking, and to showcase their competencies developed through the virtual project.

How we measured efficacy:

At the final workshop, students are invited to reflect on their learning and assessments. Students report they find the professional letter assessment useful, as there are few opportunities to practise the art of effective letter construction in the curriculum. Students particularly value the opportunity to reflect on their learning and competencies developed in the letter for their employability development.



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