Strategies to Offer Flexible Assessment and Delivery

Flexible Assessment and Delivery

Prepare to design inclusive assessment:
- Become familiar with RMIT's Assessment Policy: www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=qwxbqbg739r1
- Recognise the differences between and the purpose of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment.
- Understand that assessment can be used in multiple ways: assessment of learning; assessment as learning; and assessment for learning.
- View assessment as an integrated part of the curriculum and make sure assessment objectives and tasks are aligned to program/course learning outcomes and the learning activities of the course.
- Acknowledge that students commencing a program/course will not always possess the academic literacies (e.g. critical reading and writing skills) to successfully complete assessment tasks, and that learning needs to be scaffolded and assessment structured to be achievable for all students.

Write into the curriculum assessment that is designed for all learners to be successful:
- Design the curriculum so that students are given ample time to both understand the purpose, requirements and grading of assessment tasks, and to work on and submit the assessment. Also consider student workloads when designing and scheduling assessment tasks.

“Inclusive assessment practice aims to design assessment models that allow all students to choose the format of assessment that will enable them to express their ideas in the most equitable way.”

• Assessment tasks should be aligned with the expected competence and standards of students at the specific stage of their studies e.g. do not give students higher order complex assessment tasks at the beginning of a program/course.

• Include a range of assessment tasks that are inclusive of student cultural diversity and learning needs. Consider creating assessment that gives students options to express their preferred learning and presentation styles in equitable ways, and also consider offering students choices in the method of assessment to meet specific learning outcomes. Look at these two case studies to get an idea of how it can work, and associated benefits/challenges: http://insight.glos.ac.uk/tli/resources/lathe/Documents/issue%203/case%20studies/west.pdf. (Establish an advisory group e.g. comprising a discipline head, industry representative and ADG member, to evaluate the equity and validity of assessment in cases where students will be given a choice in the mode of assessment.)

• Where choices in methods of assessment are offered, allow students sufficient time to make a choice, and yourself extra time to grade the submitted assessment in order to meet equity and validity measures.

• Ensure that assessment is supported by an integrated approach within the curriculum to the development of English language proficiency and academic literacy skills, and work with learning support staff (e.g. the Study and Learning Centre) to plan and implement this.

• Include opportunities for group, peer and self assessment, making sure that the curriculum intentionally prepares students for these tasks and supports them in participating in and completing them.

• Design assessment tasks that are not wholly reliant on an intimate knowledge of the dominant culture, and which allow students to use multiple cultural contexts and be valued for their own perspectives.

• Use educational technologies to build in flexibility to the curriculum. For example, for students who have part time jobs or other time consuming commitments, the ability to study online at times of their choosing will have a significant impact on their chances of success in their studies. Flexibility should also be given to students to use various media and modes in their learning in the preparation and submission of assessment.

Preparing students for assessment

Inform and involve students in the process of assessment:

• Where possible involve students in assessment design and evaluation, giving them ownership of their learning development and a clearer understanding of the purpose and requirements of assessment tasks. This will also help you to develop an awareness of your students’ learning preferences. For example, in assessment design explain the purpose of a specific learning outcome, ask students in groups to brainstorm possible assessment criteria and tasks that might achieve the learning outcome, and decide as a whole group which criteria and task(s) will be adopted for the assessment. Students can be involved in assessment evaluation during a course through self and peer assessment.

• Provide students with examples of material relevant to their assessment (e.g. sample assignment questions, explanations of how to structure and compose assessment, exemplars of high quality student assessment, and assessment rubrics) and use these materials to discuss requirements with them so that they feel confident of what to do and how to succeed.
• Offer regular formal and informal feedback on student work, both as preparation for assessment and as part of assisting students with the process of completing an assessment task. Schedule an early piece of assessment, if possible in Week 3, for diagnostic and formative purposes. See Strategies to develop a feedback-rich environment.

• Inform students of resources they can use to understand assessment task requirements and to manage their study schedules e.g. using RMIT’s online Learning Lab: http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/

• Write assessment tasks in clear plain English and ask for feedback from students/colleagues from other disciplines about the clarity of what you have written before formalising the assessment task. When this has been done, talk through the assessment task with students, including its relation to specific learning outcomes and the development of graduate attributes, and allow time for questions in and out of class time (including through online contact).