Diversity of assessment strategies

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A key principle underlying good practice of assessment is to ensure that your assessment strategy for your course is appropriate and provides opportunities for all students to achieve success. This generally requires you to consider diverse assessment types (e.g., formative and summative) as well as use of a variety of assessment strategies or activities (e.g., artworks, case studies, field reports, lab reports, performances).

Yet the idea of assessment diversity should not only have a course perspective because this can lead to over-assessment as individual course coordinators attempt to provide depth and diversity in their assessment strategies.

There is a need for assessment diversity to be addressed at the program level where the program team discusses an overall strategy for assessment across the program. For example, this might include a program team planning meeting that maps the current use of assessment types and strategies/activities across the program. This mapping exercise is then analysed by the program team to identify the patterns of assessment diversity and make decisions about enhancing the assessment diversity across the program to build student knowledge and skills in multiple forms.

Diversity of assessment is limited by your creativity and imagination. There are many different and appropriate ways to measure the performances of student learning. The key principles are to ensure that your assessment strategy for your course is coherent (e.g., applies a constructive alignment approach) and uses appropriate yet multiple forms to demonstrate evidence of learning. These principles provide students with opportunities to engage with assessment in ways that meet their learning needs and develop new skills.

The following list provides an insight to the range of assessment strategies that you may consider while developing your course assessment.

- **Action research project** – use of an inquiry process based on a research approach that allows the student to investigate and evaluate their work to find solution/s to an identified problem/issue and/or improve professional practice. It follows an action-reflection cycle, and is often an example of an authentic assessment and based within a practicum context.

- **Article review** – a critical review of journal article/s that develops skills of interpretation and evaluation.

- **Authentic assessment** – an assessment that is based around developing knowledge and/or skills that are discipline specific and applied within the real world context such as real tasks carried out within the industry/profession/community. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) can lead to this type of assessment.

- **Capability based assessment** – assessment of a student’s performance to demonstrate their capacity to meet a capability.

- **Case studies** – can be used to describe, analyse, review and reflect on a specific situation, often in order to provide findings/solutions and/or recommendations for future action.

- **Class participation** – active participation in tutorial/class sessions that is monitored eg by student (self) or teacher
• **Clinical performance** – assessment of professional knowledge and skills derived or practised within a clinical workplace setting. This assessment strategy may be considered an authentic assessment. Often this strategy should use multiple ways to gain evidence of the competency levels of clinical performance through, for example, use of assessment strategies as: observations of student practice made by assessors; critical incidents, case studies, journaling, self evaluation.

• **Competency based assessment** – assessment of a student’s performance to apply their knowledge and skills to successfully complete work-related activities in a range of situations and environments, in accordance with the standard of performance expected in the workplace.

• **Critical incident analysis** – identification of a key incident, often derived from professional practice, that is significant to the learner. The learner makes the connections of its significance, provides an analysis of the incident related to the discipline theory and indicates learning and future responses.

• **Essays and text based assignments** – traditional methods of assessment that guide students to use the text-based media to examine issues/topics/themes related to the discipline/s and develop skills of making and arguing a case.

• **Examinations** – traditional methods of assessment that are administered under supervision and can include open book examinations. They can test the level of performance students have attained the appropriate/required knowledge, skills and dispositions associated with a discipline/profession/industry.

• **Field reports** – reports that result from collection, representation and analysis of data from the field and is often set within authentic learning contexts of the discipline/profession/industry. Field reports develop skills of observation, collation of field data, data organisation & representation, and analysis.

• **Group based assignments** – assignments that are complex and so require more than one person to complete the assignment. Examples can include assignments resultant from problem based learning approaches; or are multidisciplinary in nature. The appropriate size of a group needs to be considered in order to complete the task (eg groups of three or four learners are generally effective for groups meeting in real time and face-to-face; yet larger groups can be effective if groups are working in an online environment).

• **Interactive assessment** – assessment that has includes formative feedback to help the learner develop their skills and/or knowledge. Computer Assisted Instruction and Intelligent Tutoring Systems are ICT (Information & Communications Technologies) based examples interactive assessment.

• **Interview** – verbal interaction between assessor and assessed. This can be a useful strategy to provide formative feedback to the learner or group of learners: for example, as a progress report of a negotiated assessment task to ensure that learners are on task and/or if they require further guidance to complete the task.

• **Learning contracts** – individually negotiated contracts of learning between the learner and the teacher. The assessment is negotiated as part of the learning contract.

• **Learning journals** – learning journals provide spaces for reflective thinking and learning and value not only the ‘products’ of learning but also the ‘processes’ of learning. They can be print based or draw upon the functionality of ICT such as blogs

• **Literature reviews** – review of latest and/or seminal works in a discipline based literature to provide background context for an inquiry based approach to learning (eg action research project, problem based learning, research for an assignment)

• **Multimedia projects or presentations** – this mode can convey the results of research and findings that students (individually or in small groups) have been working on through an inquiry based approach such as an assignment
• **Multiple choice quizzes** – with the use of the Blackboard tool such as Test or Survey you can generate multiple choice quizzes to help students learn discipline based knowledge during the semester. This strategy could also be used to provide formative feedback to students.

• **Performances and presentations** – use of these modes provides opportunities to develop skills in oral presentation and the use of creativity to express learning. Often the greatest learning occurs when learning is transformed from one mode to another because there is a need to understand deeply the knowledge concept.

• **Portfolios** – a collection of works that provide evidence of a student’s learning. Often it is the student that is managing what evidence is created and recorded. The portfolio can be also be used as formative assessment if it is used to demonstrate progress towards, and achievement of, topic/ course/ program objectives. RMIT is currently exploring how to transform portfolios into the multimedia format using ePortfolio software such as PebblePad.

• **Poster presentations** – representation and display of results from an investigative project

• **Practical reports from laboratory/ studio work** – provides a record/ demonstration of ongoing learning and development of knowledge/ skills during the course. Provides opportunities for formative feedback and can encourage application and interpretation of concepts being learnt.

• **Practice examinations** – a useful strategy to help students build confidence in their discipline specific knowledge building in preparation for final examinations. This is an example of a learning activity that can also be used to provide formative feedback to students whereby the practice examinations are assessed by self (via sample solutions being provided by the teacher), peers (peers are involved in assessing each others’ results via sample solutions provided by the teacher), or automated assessment created using software tools like Blackboard’s Test or Survey.

• **Practicum reports or portfolio of professional experience** – assessment of professional/ industry practical skills and/or practical knowledge based within an authentic workplace setting. RMIT is currently exploring the use of ePortfolios to help manage the learning and reporting of these practical skills/ knowledge.

• **Problem based learning reports** – a systematic report that depicts an inquiry into a problem or issue that needs to be resolved. Often the problem or issue under investigation has been negotiated between the learner/s and the teacher.

• **Progress report presentations** – interim presentations of complex tasks for the purposes to identify i) achievements; ii) any barriers to complete the assessment task; and iii) provide further input to the learner/s to assist completing their assessment task to higher standards. This is a useful formative assessment strategy and a way to involve peer assessment if the presentations are made to the class group.

• **Projects** – in depth investigation and analysis of a topic or field

• **Research assignments** – an in depth examination of a topic/ field/ theme/ issue/ problem presented in a methodical form that may use written or multimedia formats/ modes.

• **Self and peer assessment** – provides opportunities for students to develop their own metacognitive skills (ie understanding how they learn and how they can improve their learning). Students develop skills in critical analysis, reflective practice and benchmarking their performance. Such strategies can be used as formative and/or summative assessment; however the teacher will need to help students develop the skills needed to assess self or peers.

• **Simulations & role plays** – they are constructed exercises/ imitations based on models that provide a safe learning environment to practice real life decision making with minimal risks and develops skills such as analysis, problem solving and decision making. They are often examples of authentic assessment as they are based on real world scenarios.