Surfacing academic integrity via authentic & integrated assessment

Introduction & Overview:

Trinity’s Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for Academic Practice (SpCert) is a research-derived 15-ECTS M-level / level 9 minor award.

The SpCert deliberately motivates candidates to move away from traditional narrative-driven (e.g. essay-based) assessment, instead driving candidates to experience ‘alternative’ assessment strategies. Participants can complete the SpCert in short or extended timeframes in a three year window.

Programme vision/goals include:

1. Longitudinal capacity building of pedagogical expertise institutionally and across the sector.
2. Develop and grow assessment literacy and academic integrity literacy relevant to the needs of programme participants.
3. Model and enable experiential engagement with diverse assessment tasks and practices in higher education, e.g. looking ‘beyond the essay’.

'Signature' programme features:

1. Purposeful and programmatic approach to teaching, learning, and assessment.
2. Intentionally flexible around working commitments in a timeframe/always part-time.
3. Practice-oriented (e.g. connection of theory with practice, 'authentic' assessment relating to professional practice).
4. Academic integrity is foregrounded in assessment.
5. Modelled and integrated use of rubrics to support growth of academic integrity literacy.
6. Blended approach incorporating/ modelling use of institutional VLE for formative development, e.g. use of discussion boards, polling techniques, synchronous digital teaching.
7. Dialogic exploration of curriculum design & assessment activities across all modules.
8. All modules feature one common/shared learning outcome to enhance participant awareness of programmatic design.

Why ‘force’ engagement with non-essay style assessment to surface academic integrity discussions?

1. Modules are geared to impact on practice, not solely develop participant awareness of pedagogical theories. Alternative assessments enable close alignment to professional teaching/assessment practice.
2. Module participants mostly hold terminal/PhD degrees, e.g. candidates are aware of how to ‘game’ traditional written assessments, e.g. to get an essay ‘over the line’ with surface level engagement in concepts/the literature. Alternative assessment can drive candidates to engage with a teaching certificate beyond a ‘box tick’ mentality.
3. Module participants are often unaware of the breadth and diversity of assessment practices. Candidates are supported to engage experientially with a broader range of assessment modalities and to reflect on their application in professional practice.
4. Assessment diversity creates opportunities for peer learning and discussion around challenges to academic integrity both globally and at the discipline level (e.g. beyond the plagiarism discourse).
5. Candidates are supported to reflect on strengths and weaknesses of existing assessment approaches in use in their own disciplines (e.g. essays) and to consider where/how academic integrity can be upheld through a range of practices and approaches.

Assessment modalities typically engaged with/encountered by participants:

- Scholarly resources suitable for peers in discipline
- Critical reflection on module-level impact on personal practice
- Reflective annotation of existing module outlines
- Reflective annotation on and design of novel module outlines
- Development of digital artefacts to be used in professional practice
- Annotated peer review of teaching and/or of teaching ‘artefacts’
- ‘Capstone’ integrative portfolio linking learning across modules

Key Takeaways:

1. Formalised educator development in teaching and learning (e.g. SpCert awards) enhances educator assessment literacy and academic integrity literacy.
2. Educator experiences of ‘alternative’ assessment (e.g. modular/ integrated across the SpCert) can scaffold the development of their own assessment literacy.
3. Assessment authenticity and optionality (e.g. personalisation/usable outputs) support assessment integrity.
4. Driving participants to experience non-traditional essay assessment encourages them to experiment with alternative assessments in their own practice.

Programme structure: Core + 2

1. M-level/L9 award
2. Participants complete one core 5 ECTS module plus two others as per their own interests
3. Programme should be completed within a 3 year window

Administrative support & pastoral support from programme team

SINCE 2014/15:

• 473 staff enrolled in the SpCert
• 125 graduates
• 51 modules offered

References:

4. Byrne, N.; Roche, C. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2012.686897

Key words: academic integrity, authentic assessment, higher education teaching and learning, higher education academic practice