Digital Assessment: Expanding the Repertoire

Context

Assessment is both a feature of module and programme design and a key driver in student learning. Many different methods and techniques can be used or adapted to meet assessment needs across the disciplines and a broad range of assessment practices and assignment 'types' will often feature across a module or programme. This resource is intended to prompt reflection on the breadth of potential assessment activity that can be used across the disciplines. Consider how your assessment strategy enables students to demonstrate their achievement of one or more learning outcomes and whether assessment activity is adequately aligned with workload.

Purpose

The vast majority of assessments explored in this resource can be seen as **'digital' assessments**, whether digitally inflected (e.g. **traditional assessment practices now enabled through digital technologies**), **assessments which are defined through their use of digital technology**, or **assessments moved into the digital context in response to Covid-19 restrictions** (e.g. staged in digital rather than in f2f/physical space).

The assessment methods and practices outlined here can be used either **summatively**, e.g. a mark/grade contributing to progression or a degree is to be awarded, and/or **formatively**, e.g. not-for-credit, to inform and support student learning or for feedback alone. Some of the practices shared can also be used **diagnostically** to evaluate and take the pulse of student learning in real-time, (e.g. enabling you to respond to student needs).

Many of these assessment practices can be 'stepped', acting as formative assessment that leads towards a high-stakes summative assessment. Others may be best suited for students to use to consolidate learning (e.g. before, during, or after a lecture) or alternatively as a revision tool. Additional resources on the most frequently used assessment practices are also available through the Gateway to Digital Assessment resource hub. The 'categories' of assessment practice suggested below are not exhaustive but are intended to make the resource easier to navigate.

Formative and/or Diagnostic Assessment (typically low stakes)

1. **Self-Assessment:** Students judge their own work against explicit criteria, ideally setting learning targets based on what they still need to learn and manage the organisation of their learning. Self-assessment might be formally assigned by educators or undertaken autonomously by learners.

2. **Peer Assessment:** Students review and evaluate each other's work and offer feedback and suggestions for development. Not typically used for awarding marks formally. Peer-assessment might be formally assigned by educators or undertaken autonomously by learners. Self-assessment is often more critical if done after a round of peer assessment activity.

3. **Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)**: These are simple, non-graded, potentially anonymous, in-class activities designed to give both lecturers and students useful feedback on the teaching-learning process in real time, e.g. muddiest point statements, think-pair-share moments, minute papers, key sentences, word clouds, polls, likert-style statement agreement polls etc.

4. **Feedback/Feedforward for Teaching Activity:** Tools and/or apps similar to MS/Google Forms, TurningPoint, Socrative, Mentimeter, Flinga, and Padlet can be used to support feedback and formative assessment of individual, group, and collaborative work. Preferred tools may vary.

5. **Self-review Template:** Students write up responses to guided prompt questions in advance of a final submission or as part of a response to grading comments.

6. **Problem Sheets:** Students review and respond to questions in advance of a taught session, which are then discussed in class. Responses to these templates (perhaps prepared using Google or Microsoft Forms or similar) are likely **not** teacher assessed.

7. **Statements of Relevance:** Students judge, critique, and/or evaluate the relevance of a workshop, article, field observation to another task or activity.

8. **360 Evaluation:** This can be particularly suited for work placements where questions cover a broad range of workplace competencies. Students receive confidential, anonymous feedback from the people around them—perhaps most easily achieved through structured webforms & anonymous feedback sheets. 360s typically involve self-assessment aligned with peer/lecturer/supervisor evaluation.

9. **Tests and Surveys** (in VLE): Students are tested and/or consolidate their learning through responding to multiple choice and short answers questions. Typically low-stakes and may include automated feedback. These might include:
   a. **Modified Essay Questions (MEQs)**: a sequence of questions based on a case study. Students presented with a scenario, and then given a series of questions based on it that they answer with a short text. Assess a student's ability to identify problems, and resolve them by applying their existing knowledge.
   b. **Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)**: short answer questions often used in quizzes and short tests.

10. **Concept Map:** a type of graphic organizer that can used to organize and represent knowledge of a subject. Concept maps begin with a main idea (or concept) and then branch out to show how that main idea can be broken down into specific topics. May be done on paper or using digital tools.

Narrative-driven assessment (e.g. essays, lab reports, papers)

1. **Essay:** Students produce a discursive and critical synthesis of ideas, usually footnoted/referenced to a specific style.
2. **Conference Paper:** Students produce a presentation script (and/or presentation) intended for oral delivery (group/individual options).
3. **Oral Presentation or Exams:** A presentation of materials/ data/ information tailored to a specific audience. Can be pre-recorded for asynchronous delivery or happen in live time.
4. **Case Study:** Students engage critically with one or more 'areas of focus' at a deep level.
5. **Business Plan/Case:** Students formally outline goals and set out a stepped plan for reaching them, typically contextualised to a specific business need/scenario or team.
6. **Laboratory Report:** Students produce a discursive report detailing one or experiments in a practical laboratory or series of laboratories detailing their/their group's practicals. Typically structured as background information, materials and methods, results, discussion, conclusions, references.
7. **Literature Review:** Students gather together a critical overview of the practical/theoretical/methodological evidence base on a specific theme or topic.
8. **Field Report:** Data is gathered and analysed critically in context, typically drawing on material gathered through observation, e.g. people/places/objects of study.
9. **Critical Incident Account:** Often used by professionally oriented programmes such as healthcare and allied professions. A CIA is a short narrative account focusing on a specific professional experience, ideally suited for addressing values and attitudes, and for professional development.
10. **Book Review**: A discursive and critical summary of a text (book, video, article, textbook etc).
11. **Journal**: Easily facilitated with VLE tools, a journal is a single-authored series of (written) documents produced over a specific period of time. Journalling can encourage students to develop their capacity to write critically about specific instances of learning, e.g. in response to essay, critical incident, or reflective prompts.
12. **Reflective Journal**: Reflective writing kept across the duration of a course with the aim of recording developmental moments. Each entry acts as a unique 'snapshot' record of the student's thinking and learning at a particular moment and can used to track 'development' of skills/skills competences/professional orientation. Easily facilitated with VLE tools.
13. **Reflective Essay:** More extensive than a learning journal and linked to or grounded in an evidence base. Typically used to get a sense of student insight/reflection into holistic development rather than the 'snapshot' of individual journal entries.
14. **Report:** written or oral document linked to workplace practices and learning.
15. **Précis**: Students review, select key ideas, and condense two or more articles, briefings, policy papers (etc) down to a tight word limit.
16. **Thesis/Dissertation:** an extended in-depth document presenting the author's research and findings.

17. **Blog:** can be facilitated in the VLE or externally. Students create a (regularly updated) website featuring a range of often informal diary-style text entries ('posts'), which can invite peer/external comments to the authors can respond. Blogs offer a venue highly suitable for reflective writing.
18. **Wiki:** Students might use a wiki tool in the VLE or go externally to Wikipedia. Students (collaboratively) modify a wiki's content and/or structure directly from the web browser.
19. **Development of an Artefact:** Students crystallise or express their assessment as either a physical or digital artefact such as a computer programme, work of art, fashion accessory, web page, constructed model in engineering, architectural design mock-up model, etc.

Multistage assessment (e.g. 'stepped', 'gateway' or 'stackable' assessments)

1. **Two-Stage Assessment:** one or more assessment component is assessed formatively (e.g. a literature review contributing to a dissertation might be formally peer assessed for feedback, the dissertation containing the literature review is summatively teacher-assessed).
2. **Grant Application:** students develop a proposal and pitch for a final year project / dissertation / thesis.
3. **Essay plan:** students prepare an essay 'skeleton' to include arguments, key ideas, and initial conclusions to be developed further.
4. **Annotated Bibliography:** students contextualise the sources they are citing or using to inform their research/assessment, typically providing a critical commentary on each one and its relevance/link to the project's research questions.
5. **Laboratory Notebook:** student documentation of an experimental process undertaken often captures challenges discovered and addressed across a series of lab experiments. This could be image-captured and submitted alongside major assessment as contributing to evidence of thought ownership/engagement.
6. **Reflective Journal Entries:** submitted and assessed online— used as tool for assessment wherever a repository of evidence, combined with a reflective analysis of the process and outcomes, is prepared for assessment and validation against a set of external criteria.
7. **Discussion Board:** typically a text-driven area where students can 'post' comments/reflections and interact with each other. Can be assessed qualitatively or quantitatively (e.g. by number of posts).
8. **Patchwork Test:** students produce a series of short individual pieces of writing, carried out at regular intervals throughout a module - typically over a term or semester. Writing is shared with other students in small working groups of four or five.
9. **Peer teaching or Artefacts developed for peers**: students develop learning resources/materials that support the learning activities and/or the evaluation and assessment planned for a course of study.
20. **Poster Presentation:** students condense key messages from a research corpus and rearticulate it with visual supports and references to communicate to a different audience.

Holistic Assessment (often outward-facing 'authentic' assessment practices)

These assessment practices often require students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge, skills, and appropriate behaviours and are often aligned with the 'outside world' skills, knowledge, and behaviours required of a graduate.

1. **Research Project:** Individual or group activity linked to a particular theme or area of focus. May be of different 'size' (in terms of credits) and duration.
2. **Open-book Assessment:** Students have access to learning materials when they are presented with a problem and can use their materials to support them in their response. Best used to assess what a student can do with what they know, rather than 'what' they know.
3. **Work-based Placement:** Students on a work-based placement are assessed on what they do and how they do it, often aligned to an explicit set of professional standards shared by a professional or regulatory body (e.g. in clinical, educational, engineering, etc), or on how they develop during a work-based placement.
4. **In-Tray Exercise:** Students respond to a professionally-oriented 'authentic' scenario, demonstrating how they might prioritise and manage a real-world set of tasks such as including telephone calls, emails, complaints and reports.
5. **Professional Competence Assessment:** Students are assessed against competence standards (e.g. in medicine, nursing, and aligned professions) to become safe, caring, competent decision-makers who are willing to accept personal and professional accountability.
6. **Long Case-Trigger Scenario:** Learners are assessed on how they respond to/engage with a complex case scenario. Often used with medical trainees to enhance practical skills.
7. **Assessment Stations:** Students move between different stations, each of which focuses on enabling the assessment of a different set of skills or behaviours.
8. **Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE):** OSCEs are intended to assess professional competences (e.g. behaviours, knowledge, and skills) holistically. Students are typically assessed in a formalised role-play context in a clinical setting moving between different assessment stations.
9. **Formal Observation:** An assessor or peer undertakes a structured observation, detailing specific practices observed which are usually commented on/discussed afterwards. Often used in clinical or educational settings. Can be very useful to inform developmental and/or goal-setting conversations.
10. **Mini Clinical Evaluation Exercise (mini-CEX):** An expert observes and rates the actual performance of trainees in the workplace.
11. **Policy Brief, Translation, and/or Précis:** Students are asked to summarise and 'translate' key ideas from an academic paper to an audience of policy-makers, professionals, politicians, etc. The 'source' and 'destination' texts may or may not be in the same language.

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