Getting it right: developing guidelines and tool for online assessment in NZ tertiary contexts

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Online assessment: our definition

Using online tools in assessment for and of student learning:

tasks,

feedback, and

marking/grading
Online assessment

Online teaching and assessment in some form is... only likely to increase in size and significance (Barber, Donnelly, & Rizvi, 2013; Guiney, 2013; Johnson et al., 2013).

Effective online assessment can offer a range of benefits to both students and teachers including more interactive assessment and feedback, increased efficiency and reduced workload (JISC, 2010).

How does this relate to your context?

What issues are you experiencing?
Issues in online assessment

- Pedagogical skills
- Technical skills
- Identifying appropriate assessment tasks and tools
Aim
To support student learning through improving online assessment practice in tertiary contexts

Outputs
1. a set of guidelines for teachers
2. an interactive tool
“The Guidelines” are now in 4 parts

Background and how to use

6 evidence-based principles

10 guiding questions

12 case studies
12 case studies, 4 institutions

- **Apps** for practical assessment
- **Blogs** as a reflective tool
- **ePortfolios** to support on-going learning
- **ePortfolios** to expose the hidden curriculum
- **ePortfolios** for an industry-based project
- **Forums** to develop communication skills
- **Gaming** to practise real world skills
- **Glossaries** for peer critique and feedback
- **Quizzes** to support learning
- **Turnitin** for marking, feedback and peer evaluation
- **Video** to develop real world skills for employability
- **Wikis** to assess teamwork
Case studies

**USING BLOGS AS A REFLECTIVE TOOL**

**CHALLENGE**
For a course based on developing interpersonal skills and cultural awareness, fostering the students' ability to be reflective learners is critical. Learning to reflect requires students to have something useful and meaningful to reflect on, as well as an appropriate tool for, or means of recording those reflections. Staff teaching the course have designed a learning environment wherein blogs are the most effective and transparent reflective tool.

**BACKGROUND**
Betty teaches a level 5 intercultural competence paper with between 15-20 students, that sits within a bachelor programme in social sciences. She has used blogs since 2000 as a means of gathering and giving feedback to students in both a formative and summative way. Blogs create a more constant reflective writing, integrating their own experiences with evidence and theory gained in class.

**THE ASSESSMENT**
Blogs are used as a space for students to evaluate their learning based on evidence from their weekly blogs. Students are taught how to use blogs in their first class and then post weekly entries over five weeks, responding to set tasks and questions. They record their observations of personal learning in class that includes their interactions with classmates and application of relevant theory.

Blogs offer a useful and appropriate means of assessment particularly suited to the holistic nature of the paper’s learning outcomes, which track development of attitudes and reflective skills over time. Betty uses them to develop the students initial cultural awareness and integrates evidence of this with development theory.

**WHY THIS ASSESSMENT WORKS**
The interactive nature of this particular blog fulfils the three core facets of intercultural learning: experiential, themselves and others, dialogic, writing about themselves and viewing others’ writing, and collaborative: seeing classmates’ responses to the same content and learning from, and with, each other.

**Ways this assessment works**
Students enjoy the incremental nature of the blog as assessment, receiving guidance in small doses manageable amounts rather than one block assessment. The regularity of the feedback – the first time a student is reading and responding to their posts, is an added incentive to continued participation. As blogs are open to all students they can read and comment on each other’s blog entries, as well as any formative feedback posted by the teacher. Students perceive this as a positive learning opportunity, not as a privacy issue as one might expect. Students new to reflection appreciate the opportunity to view others’ blogs as models or exemplars, showing them what is expected and increasing their confidence with the process. Viewing the teacher’s feedback also acts a transparent and achievable benchmark. They appreciate the relevance and alignment of the blogging process to the course content and learning outcomes.

**KEY POINTS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE**
A scaffolding process of regular, weekly instruction, guidance and theory that follows a prescribed timeline is essential for students to see their own progress and development over time. And so can the teacher.

Open, transparent blogs allow students to learn from and with each other.

**FINAL WORD**
This case demonstrates a creative use of blogs for assessing the development of reflective skills. Similar online tools for such purposes could be portfolio systems that aim to compile a series of dated individual posts or journal entries. Betty uses blogs with her class in a way that integrates individual students' entries with those of their peers, as well as feedback from their teachers. Blogs create a dynamic environment where students can track their own development and changing attitudes a long time before their peers, learning from and with each other. This process neatly and ideally addresses the challenge of assessing the particular set of holistic competencies and capabilities integral to this paper’s learning outcomes.
Become a reviewer!

Guidelines – 3 steps
We are most interested in your opinion of the work’s **accuracy** (ring of truth) and its **usefulness** to tertiary teaching staff working with online assessment.

Please could you:

1. **Download** the attached document and rename it by adding your initials
2. **Add** your comments and questions
3. **Email** your reviewed version to Jane Terrell at [j.l.terrell@massey.ac.nz](mailto:j.l.terrell@massey.ac.nz)
“The tool” is now “OATS”: Online Assessment Tool Selector

What is it?
An interactive online flowchart designed to guide a teacher’s choices re online assessment

How does it work?
Guided questions lead the teacher through a series of decisions to choose an appropriate online assessment
→ recommended options

Link to tool
Become a reviewer!

OATS – 4 steps

The feedback we need is rather detailed, but doesn’t take long. Please plan to test the OATS at least three times. Each time you test:

1. Start with an online tool & assessment task in mind
2. Note this, and your other choices on the OATS Feedback Table:

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<th>Tool &amp; task</th>
<th>Bloom</th>
<th>5 verbs</th>
<th>Choices</th>
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Become a reviewer!

OATS (continued)

3. Fill out the feedback survey on the results page

4. Email your completed OATS Feedback Table to Dave Snell at d.j.snell@massey.ac.nz
Become a reviewer!

Give us your email address

Jane Terrell – Project Leader
j.l.terrell@massey.ac.nz


Contact

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j.l.terrell@massey.ac.nz