

# Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together (RAFT):

A Collective Action  
Research Journey

September 2021 - June 2025




HEA



NATIONAL FORUM  
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING  
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

# Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together (RAFT): A Collective Action Research Journey September 2021 – June 2025

Edited by Tom O'Mahony

 0000-0002-0658-5797

Cover Design: Ms Rebecca Noonan, Student Engagement and Retention Officer, MTU.


LICENSE



Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together (RAFT): A Collective Action Research Journey September 2021 – June 2025 Copyright © 2026 by Dr Tom O'Mahony is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

Recommended citation:

O'Mahony, T. (2026), Reimagining Assessment and Feedback Together (RAFT): A Collective Action Research Journey September 2021 – June 2025, Munster Technological University, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.31129897>

About the Editor. Tom O'Mahony ( 0000-0002-0658-5797) is a Senior Lecturer & Educational Researcher with the Teaching and Learning Unit, Munster Technological University, Cork IRELAND.

Acknowledgements. For their support and inspiration in shaping and coordinating the RAFT initiative, I would like to especially thank my colleagues Will Carey, Dr. Aoife McCarthy and Sinead Huskisson. I acknowledge the immense contribution of Marese Birmingham as without her leadership RAFT would never have happened. My thanks go to the current head of the Teaching and Learning Unit, Dr. Angela Wright. Thanks also to my colleagues Catherine Murphy and Cian Kingston who manage the SATLE project and associated finances for MTU.

RAFT is funded by the HEA and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education via the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement fund. We gratefully acknowledge that funding.



Co-ordinated and supported by Teaching and Learning Unit

## Contents

Part 1: Introduction to the Re-imagining Assessment and Feedback Together Initiative..	6
RAFT's Theoretical Roots.....	7
The Re-Imagining Assessment & Feedback Initiative .....	14
Part 2: Collaborative Rubric Construction and Evaluative Judgement.....	18
Co-creating a Dissertation Thesis Assessment Rubric.....	19
Developing Students' Evaluative Judgement Skills for the Placement Application Process.....	22
Reimagining Assessment Strategies - Co-constructed Academic Literacies (RASCAL) .....	25
Co-constructing an Assessment Rubric for Applied and Fine Art.....	28
'Do I know what good looks like?' An evaluation of the effectiveness of a student led co-created poster presentation rubric to support student learning.....	31
The Development, Implementation & Evaluation of Assessment Rubrics for Modules in Sport, Fitness, Coaching & Physical Education.....	37
Part 3: Assessment and Feedback in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL).....	41
A Co-Creative Approach to developing Assessment and Feedback rubrics in Clinical Work Practice.....	42
Impact of Student Voice, Co-Creation, Feedback and Peer-Assessment on Student Engagement and Learning.....	46
Using a Learning Plan as a Tool to Enhance Student Engagement & Performance in a Capstone Engineering Laboratory Module .....	50
Do Peer Review & Role-Play Assist in Securing a Work Placement? .....	52
Part 4: Peer-Assisted Learning and Feedback Literacies .....	55
Implementing Peer Feedback in a First-Year Social Care Module.....	56
Development and Evaluation of a Structured Feedback Intervention to Support Students' Learning on a Personal Training Module .....	59
How does Peer Feedback Impact Academic Performance?.....	63
An Exploration of Collaborative Essay-Writing as a Mechanism for Supporting Skills Development & Enhancing Feedback Effectiveness in Larger Classes .....	67
Programming Scoring Guide Creation & Application for First Year Computer Science Students.....	71
Enhancing the Clarity of Practical Agricultural Assessments via a Practice Assessment .....	76

Impact of Student Voice, Co-Creation, Feedback & Peer-Assessment on Student Engagement & Learning .....	79
The Impact of using Rubrics and Exemplars in a Fluid Dynamics Module .....	82
Part 5: Academic Integrity and Emerging Technologies .....	85
Integrating Ethical AI Use in Academic Assessment.....	86
Assessing the Impact of an Oral Defence in Undergraduate Physics Laboratories....	89
From Reflection to Action: Enhancing Assessment & Feedback, Academic Integrity, and Professional Identity in the BIS Programme .....	92
The Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Co-created Rubric for Presentation Assessments across Sport and Exercise Modules .....	96
Co-Constructing an Open-Book In-Class Assessment with Part Time HRM Students .....	100
Part 6: Exploring the Student Experience.....	104
Motivating Students to Engage with Rubrics.....	105
Student Experience of Assessment & Feedback in Hospitality Management .....	110
To What Extent Does Counselling Training Impact a Student’s Levels of Self-Reflection & Insight .....	113

## Part 1: Introduction to the Re-imagining Assessment and Feedback Together Initiative

This opening section establishes the theoretical underpinnings and foundational framework of the Reimagining Assessment & Feedback Together (RAFT) initiative. The first chapter delves into the theoretical foundations, exploring the transition toward learner-centred assessment and the ethical imperative of student partnership. The second chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the RAFT framework, detailing its year-long action research approach that empowers staff as teacher-researchers to solve situated assessment challenges. Collectively, these chapters contextualize RAFT's mission to transform assessment practice and culture by valuing the student voice and fostering inclusive, whole-class assessment co-creation.

# RAFT's Theoretical Roots

DR. TOM O'MAHONY  
MTU TEACHING AND LEARNING UNIT

The Reimagining Assessment & Feedback Together (RAFT) initiative was born out of SATLE funding in 2021 in response to student dissatisfaction with assessment and feedback in Ireland (ISSE, 2022). The approach was informed by the literature on professional development in higher education which indicates that longer-duration, active and collaborative approaches to instructional development are more impactful than transmissive approaches (Desimone, 2009; Stes et al., 2010). In that sense, the discourse on professional development mirrors the discourse on student learning which also evidences active and collaborative approach (Freeman et al., 2014; Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023). The focus on assessment and feedback was also informed by the critical role that assessment plays in supporting learning in higher education. Over the past two decades, assessment has been regarded as the 'most powerful lever' teachers possess for influencing how students learn and behave within a course (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003). Conversely, the failure to address assessment deficiencies has led to it being dubbed the 'Achilles' heel' of university teaching quality (Knight, 2002). Within the assessment process, feedback is recognised as a powerful driver of student learning (Evans, 2013; Wiliam, 2011). However, within the Irish context, the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement indicates that only 41% of students were satisfied with feedback quality (ISSE, 2022). In 2005, in the UK, student satisfaction with assessment and feedback, as evidenced by the UK National Student Survey, ran at 60%. A persistent and dedicated focus on assessment and feedback has resulted in that satisfaction level rising to 78.3% (Office for Students, 2018). Therefore, RAFT's commitment to evidence-based enhancement of assessment and feedback is a necessary institutional response to this Irish challenge.

Contemporary assessment scholarship demands a fundamental shift away from viewing feedback as simply a transmission of information from teacher to student. Influential research has centred on addressing the critique of this traditional understanding of feedback (W. Sun et al., 2024). The core conceptualization has shifted towards defining feedback as a learner-centred process (Carless, 2020). This approach requires faculty development programs to prioritize moving beyond Assessment FOR Learning (formative dialogue) toward Assessment AS Learning, wherein the student is empowered to self-regulate and critically evaluate their performance (Sadler, 2010). The student becomes the key decision-maker and assumes greater responsibility, shifting the locus of control away from the teacher (Sadler, 2010). This shift is reflected in the emergent research frontiers, which, starting from 2021 onwards, have increasingly focused on 'feedback literacy' (Carless, 2022; Carless & Boud, 2018) and 'evaluative judgement' (Tai et al., 2018), the capacity to make sense of information and assess the quality of one's own work.

This shift towards learner-centred assessment approaches parallels the adoption of student partnership approaches which are fundamentally rooted in the academic and ethical imperative to listen to and value the student voice in the design and reform of higher education practices. Student voice is defined as valuing the views students express regarding their learning experiences and communicating those views to people who influence change (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Integrating student voice supports meaningful dialogue that breaks down traditional barriers between instructors and students, affirms students' knowledge and capacities, and supports the transformation of teaching practices and institutional culture (Cook-Sather, 2020). From a social justice perspective, working with students as partners (SaP) actively contributes to efforts to achieve equity and inclusion by challenging traditional hierarchies and focusing on breaking down barriers that prevent equitable opportunities and engagement in education (Healey, 2024). Furthermore, failing to position students as active actors and agents may be considered unethical, making genuine partnership

necessary to enable students to identify areas of practice that matter to them and recommend changes (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011).

Implementing student partnership yields numerous positive and mutually beneficial impacts on both students and institutional culture. For students, partnership democratizes the assessment process, offering greater agency in their own and peers' learning while assisting them in developing assessment literacy (Deeley & Bovill, 2017). Through methods like self and peer assessment, students develop a sense of ownership and agency and gain critical evaluation skills, resulting in a generally positive impact on their learning experience (S. (Alice) Sun et al., 2023). For staff and the institution, partnership facilitates the transformation of teaching practices and the broader institutional culture (Cook-Sather, 2020). By recognizing the different expertise partners bring, nurturing power-sharing relationships, and encouraging dialogue, staff gain insights that can provide meaningful solutions to long-standing problems (Healey, 2024). This relational approach also helps establish a common language and mutual understanding around assessment criteria, which in turn leads to greater efficiency, precision, and consistency in assessment and feedback processes for educators (S. (Alice) Sun et al., 2023).

Two distinct partnership models involve either a small group of student volunteers or a whole-class approach. The predominant focus internationally has involved the selection of small groups of often already super-engaged or privileged students (Bovill, 2020). This selective model risks creating an 'elite' of super-engaged students and exacerbating existing inequalities. In contrast, whole-class co-creation involves inviting the entire class to actively collaborate and negotiate elements of the learning process (Bovill, 2020). This method is argued to be inherently more inclusive than selection-based models, making the benefits of co-creation accessible to all students within the class. For institutions aiming to scale up co-creation activity, motivating staff to embed this practice into their curriculum is seen as a powerful way to reach larger numbers of

students by focusing on continuous, embedded practice rather than isolated, small-scale projects (Bovill, 2020).

The Reimagining Assessment & Feedback Together (RAFT) initiative adopts an action research approach, which the literature confirms is an effective framework for driving professional development and supporting sustained pedagogical change in higher education. Action research is fundamentally a practically oriented research approach whereby the process promotes researchers' and participants' understandings and mindsets. The term action research was first coined in 1946 by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (Messikh, 2020). Lewin criticized the tendency to separate social theories from practitioner actions, insisting that there should be "no action without research; and no research without action" (McTaggart, 1997). Action research is characterized by Lewin as a cyclical process — a spiral of steps, that involve problematising, research, planning, implementation, evaluation and reflection — which is flexible, self-reflective, critical, and production-oriented (Messikh, 2020). Crucially, action research is not merely about learning; it is centered on knowledge production and the improvement of practice (McTaggart, 1997).

Action research is justified as an effective mechanism for driving professional development and pedagogical change because it directly connects research and practice (Messikh, 2020). Action research supports the professional growth of academic staff by encouraging them to take on the teacher-researcher role (Messikh, 2020). This role requires educators to become systematic investigators and critical explorers of their own problems. By engaging in the action research process, teachers enlarge their theoretical knowledge by reading previous research findings, thereby reducing the existing gap between research and practice (Messikh, 2020). Educational action research provides staff with the opportunity to become effective, self-reliant problem-solvers to unique, situated challenges that only they can better understand and administer in their classrooms (Messikh, 2020). This sustained, systematic

approach, which includes identifying problems and collecting data, subsequently empowers teachers.

Since 2021, the Reimagining Assessment & Feedback Together (RAFT) initiative has switched focus from largely individual to collaborative projects while the emergence of generative-AI has resulted in an increased focus on academic integrity. However, these theoretical strands (assessment and feedback - student partnership - action research) continue to underpin the RAFT initiative and provide the foundation for the case studies presented in this volume. Rather than offering prescriptive models or ‘best practice’ solutions, the chapters that follow document situated, discipline-specific attempts to rethink assessment and feedback through student partnership and action research. Each case study represents a local response to a shared challenge, shaped by context, constraint, and collaboration. In foregrounding process as much as product, RAFT positions assessment reform as an ongoing, relational, and inquiry-driven endeavour — one that is increasingly urgent in a higher education landscape marked by massification, equity concerns, and the rapid emergence of generative AI. This collection therefore invites readers not to replicate these practices wholesale, but to adapt, question, and build upon them within their own contexts, continuing the collective work of reimagining assessment and feedback together.

## References

- Bovill, C. (2020). Co-creation in learning and teaching: The case for a whole-class approach in higher education. *Higher Education*, 79(6), 1023–1037. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00453-w>
- Carless, D. (2020). Longitudinal perspectives on students’ experiences of feedback: A need for teacher–student partnerships. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(3), 425–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1684455>
- Carless, D. (2022). From teacher transmission of information to student feedback literacy: Activating the learner role in feedback processes. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 23(2), 143–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787420945845>

- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315–1325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>
- Cook-Sather, A. (2020). Student voice across contexts: Fostering student agency in today's schools. *Theory Into Practice*, 59(2), 182–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1705091>
- Deeley, S. J., & Bovill, C. (2017). Staff student partnership in assessment: Enhancing assessment literacy through democratic practices. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(3), 463–477.
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving Impact Studies of Teachers' Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181–199. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140>
- Dunne, E., & Zandstra, R. (2011). Students as change agents: New ways of engaging with learning and teaching in higher education. *ESCalate*.
- Evans, C. (2013). Making Sense of Assessment Feedback in Higher Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(1), 70–120.
- Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(23), 8410–8415. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1319030111>
- Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C. (2003). Measuring the response of students to assessment: The Assessment Experience Questionnaire. 11th Improving Student Learning Symposium, 1–12.
- Gonzalez, T. E., Hernandez-Saca, D. I., & Artiles, A. J. (2017). In search of voice: Theory and methods in K-12 student voice research in the US, 1990–2010. *Educational Review*, 69(4), 451–473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2016.1231661>
- Healey, R. L. (2024). Bringing a Social Justice Lens to Matthews' Five Propositions for Genuine Students-as-Partners Practice: A Narrative Review. *Social Sciences*, 13(11), 577. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13110577>
- ISSE. (2022). Irish Survey of Student Engagement National Report 2022. Irish Survey of Student Engagement. <https://report.studentsurvey.ie/>
- Knight, P. (2002). Summative Assessment in Higher Education: Practices in disarray. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(3), 275–286.
- Kozanitis, A., & Nenciovici, L. (2023). Effect of active learning versus traditional lecturing on the learning achievement of college students in humanities and social sciences:

- A meta-analysis. *Higher Education*, 86(6), 1377–1394.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00977-8>
- McTaggart, R. (1997). *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*. SUNY Press.
- Messikh, D. (2020). A Systematic Review of the Outcomes of Using Action Research in Education. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(1), 482–488.  
<https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.32>
- Office for Students, O. for. (2018, March 7). NSS (Worldwide). National Student Survey - Office for Students; Office for Students. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>
- Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 535–550.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930903541015>
- Stes, A., Min-Leliveld, M., Gijbels, D., & Van Petegem, P. (2010). The impact of instructional development in higher education: The state-of-the-art of the research. *Educational Research Review*, 5(1), 25–49.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2009.07.001>
- Sun, S. (Alice), Gao, X. (Andy), Rahmani, B. D., Bose, P., & Davison, C. (2023). Student voice in assessment and feedback (2011–2022): A systematic review. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48(7), 1009–1024.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2156478>
- Sun, W., Ding, Y., Wang, R., Liu, Y., Wang, Y., Zhu, B., & Liu, Q. (2024). Bibliometric analysis of assessment and evaluation in higher education: 2012–2023. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 49(8), 1121–1135.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2024.2351602>
- Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., Boud, D., Dawson, P., & Panadero, E. (2018). Developing evaluative judgement: Enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work. *Higher Education*, 76(3), 467–481. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0220-3>
- Wiliam, D. (2011). What is assessment for learning? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2011.03.001>

# The Re-Imagining Assessment & Feedback Initiative

DR. TOM O'MAHONY, SINEAD HUSKISSON & Dr. AOIFE MC CARTHY  
MTU TEACHING AND LEARNING UNIT

## Project Aims

The RAFT initiative (Re-imagining Assessment & Feedback Together) was designed to provide a scaffolded model for transforming assessment practices institutionally across Munster Technological University (MTU). The TLU used external funding from the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) to design and roll out the initiative.

The broad aim of RAFT is to support the professional development of staff through small-scale action research projects enacted in partnership with students. Specific objectives include:

- Enhance assessment and especially feedback practices.
- Empower staff to co-design aspects of the assessment process with students.
- Explore impact and generate evidence-based case-studies to support transfer.

## Intervention & Implementation

RAFT adopts a year-long action research approach to explore, research, and attempt to solve assessment and feedback issues. Action research was selected because it is a reflective, practitioner-focused, and participatory process that fosters professional growth and generates contextualized solutions (Messikh, 2020). The action research cycle is enacted over one academic year – see Figure 1.

Semester 1 (Exploring and Planning): This phase supports staff in identifying an issue, exploring the relevant literature, collaborating with peers, and engaging with students-as-partners to gain multiple perspectives. This semester culminates in the development of an

Intervention Plan. Sessions during this phase cover topics like assessment for learning, feedback paradigms, and designing action research studies, including ethics and consent.

Semester 2 (Implementing, Evaluating, and Reporting): Staff focus on implementing the Intervention Plan, gathering evidence of impact, and developing outputs (like case studies) to support transferability. Student partnership continues, typically through whole-of-class partnership work or students acting as consultants.



Figure 1: RAFT Action Research Cycle

The initiative is delivered by the Teaching and Learning Unit and is an on-line initiative to accommodate MTU's six geographically distributed campuses. MS Teams is used to share resources while synchronous sessions used for peer-support, sharing, and feedback. A significant structural support mechanism is the use of RAFT funding to buy out one hour of lecturers' time per semester to provide space for meaningful engagement, addressing the challenge academic staff face in finding time for professional development.

## Evaluation & Impact

Since its inception in 2021, 60 staff have engaged with 43 different RAFT interventions, impacting an estimated 1,000 students across 6 campuses and more than 20 departments.

Key outputs include the 26 case studies (which have been combined to create this resource), contributions to two National Forum sponsored Seminars, four international conferences, two journal articles and one book chapter.

The overall evidence presented across these case-studies points to a strong positive impact on student engagement and performance. Interventions enhanced student satisfaction with assessment and feedback, standing in stark contrast to national findings (ISSE, 2022).

Staff feedback confirms the critical role of engagement with literature, peers, and students in supporting practice change. Staff reported gaining insights that provided meaningful solutions to long-standing assessment problems. The initiative created enabling conditions that helped embed



student partnership as a sustainable and scalable practice within the institution, moving beyond isolated cases.

## Summary & Reflection

Drawing on the words of one participant, ‘I think the main benefit from the RAFT project was allowing four lecturers to come together to run a pilot, informed by the literature, supported by energetic experts from the Teaching and Learning Unit, and then supported to put a plan in place to make changes. So, we had guidance on ethics, we had guidance on what the current thinking was in assessment and feedback and then how we could make it work for our module. And that structure and headspace, really

gave us that opportunity to make changes that we had talked about for a long time, but hadn't done. And now we're seeing an impact on 200 students'.

## **Resources & References**

ISSE. (2022). Irish Survey of Student Engagement National Report 2022. Irish Survey of Student Engagement. <https://report.studentsurvey.ie/>

Messikh, D. (2020). A Systematic Review of the Outcomes of Using Action Research in Education. Arab World English Journal, 11(1), 482–488.  
<https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.32>

## Part 2: Collaborative Rubric Construction and Evaluative Judgement

This section explores how collaborative rubric construction serves as a catalyst for developing students' evaluative judgement i.e. that capacity to critically assess the quality of one's own work. Across diverse disciplines, including Business Information Systems, Fine Art, and Sport Sciences, these case studies demonstrate that involving students in defining the 'rules of the game' reduces assessment anxiety and increases transparency.

Key findings highlight that co-creation helps students define 'what good looks like', with 94% of participants in one study gaining definitive clarity on performance standards. These interventions empower learners through inclusive design — such as using neurodiversity-friendly color-coding and foster a sense of ownership over the academic journey. Ultimately, these case studies illustrate that when students and staff co-construct criteria, rubrics transform into powerful self-referencing tools that bridge the gap between academic expectations and professional practice.

# Co-creating a Dissertation Thesis Assessment Rubric

DR. CON BURNS  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, LEISURE & CHILDHOOD STUDIES

## **Project Aims**

The aim of this project was to co-create and subsequently evaluate the effectiveness of a criterion-based assessment rubric to: (i) assist lecturers in marking dissertation thesis, (ii) assist students in writing the dissertation thesis, and (iii) provide students with comprehensive feedback on their dissertation thesis submission. This was important to provide students with enhanced feedback on their dissertation thesis and to ensure grading consistency as student numbers increase and more lecturers become involved in the grading process.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

The following steps outline the key tasks which were completed as part of the RAFT process:

Development of Criterion-Based Rubric (Phase 1): A series of class-based activities with students were conducted to develop the assessment rubric. This approach was adopted to assist students to gain an appreciation of what criteria are relevant in an 'excellent' submission. Furthermore, strategies such as exemplars, in class discussions, active learning strategies (think, pair share) (Particelli, 2020) were adopted to support students to develop a sense of ownership and greater understanding of key criteria. This process was conducted throughout the academic year e.g. when the literature review section was completed, focus switched to the completion of this element of the rubric.

Development of Criterion-Based Rubric (Phase 2): This content was compiled, refined and developed into an assessment rubric. This version was disseminated to supervisory

staff for review and comment. This led to the tool being further developed and refined prior to adoption. The involvement of the supervisory staff in the development phase ensured that there is a co-construction component which has been identified as having numerous advantages (Kilgour et al., 2020)

Implementation of Assessment Rubric: The completed rubric was disseminated and implemented across the Academic Year. The rubric provided opportunities for staff to communicate feedback and for students to engage and respond to the feedback throughout the academic year.

## Evaluation & Impact

An adapted version of the ‘The Assessment Experience Questionnaire’ (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003) was used to evaluate student perceptions of the assessment rubric with results summarised in Table 1: Summary of Student Evaluation.

Criteria	Score [1 - 5]
Quantity and timing of feedback	4.4
Quality of feedback	3.8
What you do with the feedback	4.3
Quality & clarity of assessment rubric	3.8

Table 1: Summary of Student Evaluation

Supervisory staff/ assessors’ perceptions of the assessment rubric tool were explored using a questionnaire based on a SWOT analysis template.

Furthermore, staff engaged in an inter-rater session whereby all supervisory staff/ assessors independently assessed a Dissertation thesis and levels of scoring agreement was assessed. All supervisory staff/assessors (n = 8) ‘strongly agreed’ that this tool should be used in future years of the Dissertation module. Furthermore, supervisory staff/assessors found that the tool was particularly useful to help them assess submissions, guide and inform student work and help students identify key criteria. At each of the submission points there was less than a 10% differential in the allocation of marks indicating high levels of inter-rater reliability.

## Summary & Reflection

Key findings indicate that the tool was positive and provided clarity and guidance for the student:

*'I felt the assessment rubric helped me as you can review this rubric and see where you were going wrong and it helped me structure my submission.'*

Overall, staff feedback was very positive:

*'Great work done on this – well done, extremely beneficial and useful for students and very easy to use as an assessor. It makes it much easier to feel confident in the grade awarded and also makes assessing much more time efficient.'*

I have found the co-creation component to be a highly effective mechanism to interact with students and to engage them as part of the development process and it is something I will definitely do more of in the future. In a workplace environment which is so hectic it was wonderful to be allocated time and support to engage with this project, the output from which will inform practice into the future.

## **Resources & References**

Particelli, B. (2020) Student-Led Assessment: A Small Study on Classroom Rubric Development and Peer Grading Practices, *Journal of Response to Writing*, 6(1), 3, 42-67.

Gibbs, G., and Simpson, C. (2003) Measuring the response of students to assessment: The Assessment Experience Questionnaire, presented at 11th Improving Student Learning Symposium. Available at: <https://docplayer.net/12543680-Measuring-the-response-of-students-to-assessmentthe-assessment-experience-questionnaire.html>

Kilgour, P., Northcote, M., Williams A., & Kilgour, A. (2020) A plan for the co-construction and collaborative use of rubrics for student learning, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(1), 140-153, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2019.1614523

A recording of Dr. Con Burns discussing this project can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/gXfA1JXbJmc>

# Developing Students' Evaluative Judgement Skills for the Placement Application Process

CATHERINE MURPHY & DENISE MCSWEENEY  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING & INFORMATION SYSTEMS

## **Project Aims**

The aim of this project is to allow students to develop evaluative judgement skills for CV and interview performance for placement applications, through the co-creation of rubrics for CVs and interviews for industry placement.

The intervention aims to equip students with the skills necessary to understand the requirements and expectations for successful placement applications. By engaging in the co-creation of rubrics for both CVs and interviews, students will gain valuable insights into the criteria considered by both academics marking their CV and interview questions and by prospective employers. The intervention places a strong emphasis on the development of evaluative judgment skills, enabling students to critically assess and subsequently enhance their own work (Tai et al., 2018).

## **Intervention & Implementation**

This intervention was implemented in the Industry Placement module of 3rd Year Business Information Systems (BIS). The intervention consisted of a series of interactive sessions aimed at developing the students' ability to create a quality CV and excel at interview performance, thereby enhancing their chances of securing their desired industry placement. The workshop used a co-creation approach to rubric development. Research suggests that adopting a co-creation approach to rubric development can positively impact the quality and effectiveness of assessment practices in educational settings (Bovill et al., 2016).

### **CV Rubric Development:**

Students were asked to list the features of a well-prepared CV and a poorly prepared CV.

1. Students were invited to view anonymised exemplars of BIS placement CVs, all from candidates applying to the same role.
2. Students discussed and gave feedback on each CV and nominated three candidates they would shortlist for interview by putting a tick on the CV.
3. Students noted the features of a well-prepared CV and a poorly prepared CV on post-it notes.
4. Post-ITs were grouped into categories of assessment criteria to produce the rubric
5. Post-ITs were grouped into categories of assessment criteria to produce the rubric
6. The rubric was then refined based on new understandings and insights from the discussions and applied to assess the students own CV.

### **Interview Rubric Development:**

1. Students were asked to list the features of a good interview performance versus a poor interview performance.
2. Pre-recorded videos of exemplar BIS placement interviews from candidates interviewing for the same role were then shown to students, who critiqued each candidates' interview.
3. Based on the discussions, the students noted the features of good performance versus poor performance on Post-IT notes.
4. Answers were grouped and arranged to produce the rubric.

### **Evaluation & Impact**

An online survey was used to gather student insights at the beginning and end of each workshop.

**Pre-Workshop:** Before the workshop, the majority of the 51 respondents expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to evaluate or create a high-quality placement CV, as well as in their capacity to evaluate and succeed in a placement interview.

**Post-Workshop:** 37 respondents stated that their confidence levels in their ability to evaluate a placement CV and interview had improved significantly. Confidence around preparation of their own CV and performing at their own placement interview also increased after the workshop.

## **Summary & Reflection**

Staff were very happy overall with the workshop. Interaction and engagement levels were excellent. Some improvements could be made to the physical environment to allow students more freedom to move around while evaluating the CVs and building the rubric with Post-ITs. The workshops ran in a tiered room which inhibited participation in some ways.

If the rubric had been digitized before the end of the workshop it would have made it easier to share and for students to get the structure. Asking the students for their thoughts on the good & bad interview questions went well however they were reluctant to offer their views until they were specifically asked to. A possible option next time would be to use Post-ITs for that element to gain more input. In conclusion, the co-creation of rubrics workshop with BIS Year 3 students has been a success, not just in terms of the tangible rubric we produced but in the intangible sense of collaborative effort developed during the session.

## **Resources & References**

- J. Tai, R. Ajjawi, D. Boud, P. Dawson, and E. Panadero, 'Developing evaluative judgement: enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work', *Higher Education*, vol. 76, no. 3, pp. 467–481, Sep. 2018, doi: 10.1007/s10734-017-0220-3.
- Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., & Felten, P. (2016). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21(1), 4- 16.

# Reimagining Assessment Strategies - Co-constructed Academic Literacies (RASCAL)

JOHN PIERCE, MARY LEONARD, MARY BEADES  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & LEISURE STUDIES

## **Project Aims**

This project was focused on refining the portfolio assessment in the academic support module for all first years in the Health & Leisure Studies department, as well as embedding these skills in more modules across the first year of the programme. This portfolio assessment is in two parts, a smaller initial portfolio in term 1 (worth 20%), and a more significant portfolio in term 2 worth 40%. An academic essay makes up the remaining 40%.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

This project arose from recognition of the need to embed, scaffold and consolidate academic literacy skills across the programme as a whole.

Before the main intervention of co-creating the assessment rubric with the students began, we called a first-year staff team meeting. In this meeting we presented the skillsets introduced to the students, and asked the team to tell us how important they felt the specific skills were for the students, and where they may be able to commit to embedding some further practice/engagement with these skills in their modules. To support this, we also developed a suite of short consolidation tasks that staff could adopt and use in their modules – these were emailed on a weekly basis to the wider department team as each skill was introduced.

The co-creation intervention began with a survey of the two previous cohorts of students to provide some baseline data. Then, we redesigned the portfolio to make it more focused and relevant, before facilitating a number of rubric co-creation sessions with the students where they provided their thoughts on the content and standard of

assessment. We collated this data and presented the final rubric. This was followed up with a survey and an active review session with a final round of focus groups to explore students' experiences of the revised portfolio and of the rubric co-creation process.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

This intervention will have an ongoing impact on the entire Health & Leisure student intake on full-time programmes (approx. 80-100 per annum). An evaluation process was built into the intervention from the outset (Nicol & Higgins, 2002).

138 students completed 2 surveys (this was a mix of the current (AY2425) first - third years in the department. The first survey asked the now second and third years about how useful the module had been to them in terms of supporting their learning across the rest of their programme(s). The second survey was for this current first-year cohort and focused on rubric co-creation, as well as the usefulness overall of the module.

The entire class group (approx. 90 students) were involved in 2 sessions, one a co-creation of the portfolio rubric, and a second active review session on the effectiveness of the rubric. The first allowed the entire student group to assist in creating the wording of the rubric for their own assessments, and the active review provided an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of this co-creation.

The final evaluation included 2 smaller focus groups of 3-4 students each time. These focus groups allowed us to probe into more detail on some of the topics that arose from the preceding surveys and active review sessions. One student noted:

“No, I thought it was good as well because at least you got the students perspective as well and it's easier for the students to understand the assignment as well because they're the ones doing it and they're the ones, uh, creating the rubric so they know exactly what to base it off and they know how to structure it themselves” (Speaker 4, Focus Group 2).

As a final note on impact, the weekly consolidation tasks we shared with colleagues were found to be useful. We have included some of these tasks in other modules that

we deliver, and lecturers from our department, and at least one other in our faculty, have embedded this content into their ongoing teaching.

## **Summary & Reflection**

Overall, this project has been successful in that there was positive feedback from the student cohort to the reimagined portfolio structure and to the rubric co-creation activity. The co-creation element is something we all agree should be kept and enacted every year with the new student cohort. This is also of potential use in other modules, programmes, and departments.

More work is needed into the future to further embed the academic support skills into other modules. The next phase of this project is to write up the detailed study and publish the paper.

We feel that the experiences the students have through this module and the approach taken to learning academic skills has provided a solid grounding and contributed to a knock-on effect that can be seen in a higher level of performance in second and third year.

## **Resources & References**

Morton, J. K., Northcote, M., Kilgour, P., & Jackson, W. A. (2021). Sharing the construction of assessment rubrics with students: A Model for collaborative rubric construction. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 18(4), 1–15. <https://open-publishing.org/journals/index.php/jutlp/article/view/476/476>

Nicol, R., & Higgins, P. (2002). A Framework for Evaluation of Outdoor Education Programmes. In *Outdoor Education: Authentic Learning in the Context of Landscapes* (2nd ed., pp. 29–37). Comenius Action 2.1.

Saltmarsh, D., & Saltmarsh, S. (2008). Has anyone read the reading? Using assessment to promote academic literacies and learning cultures. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 13(6), 621–632. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510802452343>

Dr. Roger Greenaway's website full of useful tasks, approaches, and justifications for active reviewing, see <https://reviewing.co.uk/>

# Co-constructing an Assessment Rubric for Applied and Fine Art

DR. COLLETTE NOLAN & BILL O'FLYNN  
FINE ART, MTU CRAWFORD COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

## **Project Aims**

The specific aim of this co-creation project was to empower students and enable them to take more control over the assessment process. We recognize that traditional assessments can be 'crushing' for students when they didn't understand the underlying reasons for their grades. By involving students, the project sought to clarify that assessment rubrics are tools to help students identify gaps that can be improved rather than a direct criticism of the student as an individual or their talent. The project aimed to benefit staff, by improving their ability to convey assessment information, and students, by enhancing their understanding and ability to generate feedback. Ultimately, the goal was to enhance the assessment rubric to serve as a template for both the Fine Art and the Applied Art program across all four academic years.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

Following Ethical Approval (Ethical Approval Number HREC-MR-23-061-A), the co-creation process began by issuing a call to all students that were completing second and third year of the Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art and the Bachelor of Arts in Applied Art programmes. Approximately 40, of the ~104 students that were invited to participate, accepted the invitation. The initial co-creation session involved 20 students, with subsequent sessions comprising of between 8 to 10 students.

Prior to the initial session, participants were emailed existing assessment rubrics. This first meeting focused on an open and general exploration of assessment, how it was experienced by participants and what they desired from it. Subsequent sessions then focused on the detail of the rubric, reviewing and critiquing the existing ones and

gathering suggestions for improvement. Between co-creation sessions, the academic team revised the form based on the feedback received, before presenting it back to the students for further review. The co-creation process also included meetings with academic colleagues from other creative departments, such as the School of Music, who faced similar assessment challenges.

A significant focus of the co-creation was on language, as participants highlighted negative statements (e.g., 'lacking awareness') that they felt were not conducive to learning. Student participants also sought language that aligned more closely with studio practice rather than being overly academic. Students suggested a traffic light colour coding scheme to rapidly communicate performance levels at a given moment in time. Participants reported that overly strong, saturated colours impeded comprehension for students with conditions like ADHD, dyslexia, or those on the autism spectrum which led to the adoption of muted, pastel colour coding. The density of text in the existing rubrics was also a key issue. Consequently, students often did not read the rubric and academic staff had to repeat this information orally. Thus, work focused on simplify and clarify the text to enable a more effective communication process.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

A measure of success and impact is that the co-created rubric was successfully trialled and adopted across first, second, third, and fourth year of the Fine Art programme along with the first and third year in Applied Art. In most cases, it was used for formative feedback purposes at the mid-semester point and to communicate summative performance at the semester end. The overall feedback from academic staff has been very positive. Positivity is driven by formative assessment and the experience of academic staff that the co-created rubric successfully communicates current student performance without assigning grades, which previous rubrics struggled to do. Colleagues report finding it much easier to use and communicate with, leading to more pleasant interactions, especially when delivering challenging feedback. This increased clarity reduced the need for repeated explanations to students making the feedback process more efficient for staff.

We observed that the co-created rubric significantly impacted students by empowering them and making assessment less ‘crushing’. Students understanding of feedback shifted from perceiving feedback as personal criticism to understanding that its purpose is to identify gaps that can be improved. A key change was the use of muted color-coding (e.g., pink, yellow, green) rather than numbers, which students found ‘less brutal’, ‘less reductive’, and easier to process, especially for the neurodivergent student population. We found that the simplified, visually clear form encouraged students to actually read it, unlike the previous dense versions which students often tossed aside. We observed that many students began displaying the color-coded rubrics (received at the formative assessment stage) in their workspaces, using them as practical self-referencing tools to direct improvement in the second half of the semester.



## Resources & References

Particelli, B. (2020) Student-Led Assessment: A Small Study on Classroom Rubric Development and Peer Grading Practices, *Journal of Response to Writing*, 6(1), 3, 42-67.

# ‘Do I know what good looks like?’ An evaluation of the effectiveness of a student led co-created poster presentation rubric to support student learning

DR. LISA BOLGER & DR. CON BURNS  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, LEISURE & CHILDHOOD STUDIES

## **Project Aims**

To co-create and subsequently evaluate the effectiveness of a criterion-based assessment rubric to: (i) assist lecturers in marking poster presentations (ii) support students in the design and development of an academic poster (iii) provide students with comprehensive feedback on their academic poster.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

### **Phase 1: Rubric Development**

Two cohorts of Year 3 students (n=62) engaged in workshops involving elements of co-creation (Fraile et al., 2022; Do et al., 2024), where students were required to highlight elements of effective posters, using a Think-Pair-Share approach (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021). Students examined exemplar posters to guide the identification of key criteria (within suggested overarching aspects) for inclusion in an academic poster presentation rubric and support learning (To et al., 2022). Data gathered was used to formulate the criterion-based rubric.

### **Phase 2: Implementation & Evaluation (adapted from Nicol & MaCallum, 2022)**

#### **(i) Supported Education**

Two cohorts of Year 4 students (n=84) engaged in a classroom-based poster presentation workshop in which the rubric developed in Phase 1 was shared and reviewed collectively using an exemplar poster, to support clarity and interpretation of criteria.

## **(ii) Supported Peer Evaluation**

In groups of 3, students scored two exemplar posters using the developed rubric, as part of an educational learning process. These rubrics were also used in the analysis of inter-rater reliability between students, and also between students and lecturers.

## **(iii) Supported Individual Poster Development**

Taking the learnings gained from the workshop and with the rubric for reference, students proceeded to engage in a 1-hour interactive session in which guidance and time was afforded to design and develop their own individual poster presentation.

## **(iv) Staff Review**

Staff also engaged in a poster presentation assessment workshop to upskill on the use of the rubric and to grade an exemplar poster presentation assessment to ensure consistency and reliability across raters.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

### **Inter-rater Reliability of Staff and Students**

Figure 1 evidences the strong inter-rater reliability (intra-class correlation [ICC]:  $\geq 0.80$ ) found among (i) students ( $n=84$ ; ICC: 0.833), (ii) staff ( $n=12$ ; ICC: 0.839), and (iii) students and staff combined ( $n=96$ ; ICC:0.833) when scores awarded for exemplar posters were compared, indicating a high level of understanding of the criterion being assessed among students, as well as the assessment evaluation/scoring process itself.

### **Student Feedback**

Following the completion of their poster presentation assessment, students ( $n=65$ ) completed a questionnaire, adapted from (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003), to obtain feedback on the rubric design and quality, as well as their experience of the poster presentation rubric workshop. Figure 2 presents headline results. Students strongly agreed/agreed that the rubric:

- was used to guide their submission (92%)

- helped them understand how to create an effective poster (88%)
- provided a clear understanding of what constitutes good (94%)

Students also strongly agreed/agreed that grading the posters in the workshop:

- helped them understand the key criteria (86%)
- was useful in assisting them develop their own poster (84%)

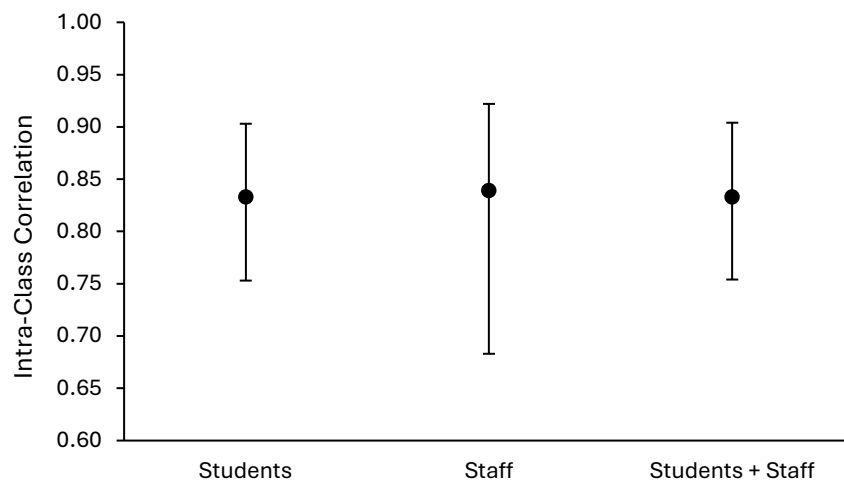


Figure 1. Inter-rater reliability ( $\pm 95\%$  confidence intervals) for students, staff, and combined group

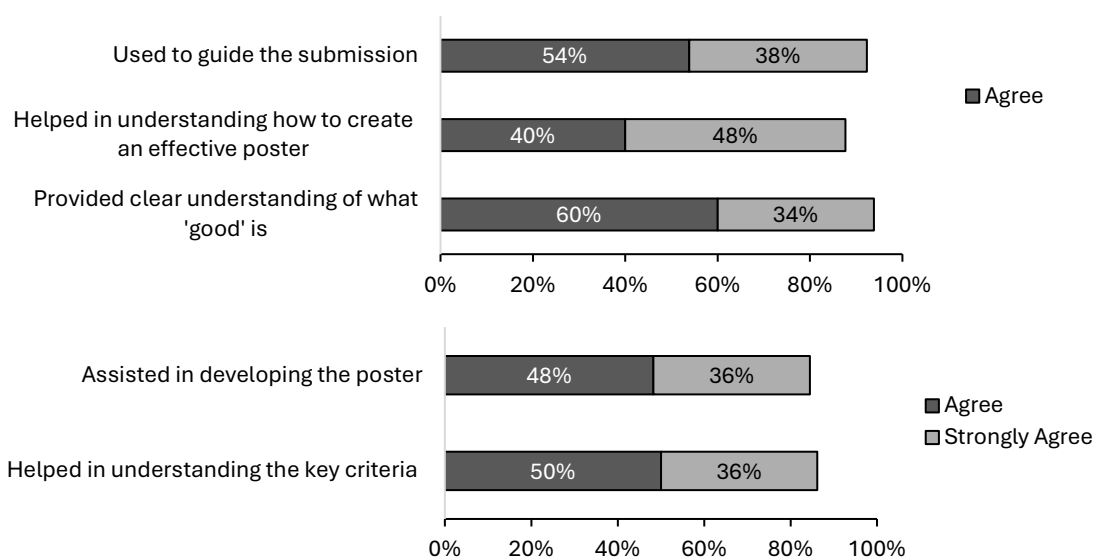


Figure 2. Proportion of students who agreed and/or strongly agreed to several criteria in relation to the rubric

Strengths of the rubric noted by the students included that it is (i) clear, (ii) concise, and (iii) outlines the key elements that are needed to be included for the poster submission.

Areas for improvement included (i) increasing the marks awarded for the presentation element itself, (ii) collating some similar criteria where possible, and (iii) including examining an exemplar oral presentation with questions to gain insight into the process and be able to prepare effectively for these elements.

### **Staff Review and Feedback**

Following the Semester 2 poster presentation assessment sessions, staff (n=12) completed a questionnaire, to obtain their feedback on the effectiveness of the rubric tool, as well as their experience of using the rubric in the poster presentation assessments.

Staff strongly agreed/agreed that the rubric:

- the criteria were easy to understand (94%)
- helped you assess student work and was an effective tool to score posters (75%)
- helped guide and inform future iterations of the student's work (75%)

The primary strengths of the rubric, noted by the majority of staff, were (i) the inclusion of clear criteria and also (ii) the 'clear direction' and 'clarity' for students regarding what is required for the submission (i.e., what constitutes 'good').

It was noted by the majority of staff that there were too many criteria to grade for assessors, particularly given the rubric is designed for use during an in-person, 'live', poster presentation assessment session. Areas for improvement suggested by staff included (i) giving an overall grade per section (e.g., format and structure) albeit considering the criteria within each, rather than marking each given criteria individually, and also (ii) reducing the number of criteria by merging similar criteria, where appropriate.

## Summary & Reflection

This project focused on co-creation of poster presentation rubric which aimed to support student understanding of key criteria, to assist in poster design & examination preparation and concurrently to support staff in the scoring of these posters. This project consisted of a series of distinct yet related phases. A novel approach adapted from Nicholls et al, (2022) involved student using the cocreated rubric to score exemplar posters. Feedback from students indicated that this process was extremely helpful to support learning and provide an understanding of key criteria. It is hoped that this approach may be further explored in future co-creation projects with the research team.

This project results have provided the research team with some key learnings which have led to the further development of the poster examination rubric. These learnings include (i) reduction and merging of criteria, (ii) scoring of key thematic areas aligned to multiple criteria as opposed to each specific criteria to make the tool more user friendly and time efficient, and (iii) amendment to the weighting of criteria to increase value of both oral presentation and ability to effectively answer questions.

Due to the proliferation of AI in higher education it is anticipated that there will be an increase in poster and other oral examination approaches. The learnings and methodological design developed as part of this project has the potential to support student and staff this educational evolution across a wide range of modules across the department University wide and among the wider third level University community. . The poster presentation rubric was identified by both students and staff to be a 'clear effective guide' which was found to positively supporting learning.

## Resources & References

Do, C., Finn, H., Brennan, A., Bruce, S., Brown, Tarabasz, A., Kirby, R. (2024). A student as partners inspired approach to assessment rubric design. *International Journal for Students as Partners*, 8 (2), 38-57. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v8i2.5670>.

- Fraile, J., Panadero, E., Pardo, R. (2017). Co-creating rubrics: The effects on self-regulated learning, self-efficacy and performance of establishing criteria with students. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 52, 69-76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.03.003>.
- Gibbs, G., & Simpson, C. (2003). Measuring the response of students to assessment: The Assessment Experience Questionnaire. 11<sup>th</sup> *Improving Student Learning Symposium*, 1-12.
- Mundelsee, L., Jurkowske, S. (2021). Think and pair before share: Effects of collaboration on students' in class participation. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 88, 102015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2021.102015>.
- Nicol, D., & McCallum, S. (2022). Making internal feedback explicit: exploiting the multiple comparisons that occur during peer review. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 47: 3, 424-443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1924620>.
- To, J., Panadero, E., Carless, D. (2022). A systematic review of the educational uses and effects of exemplars, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 47 (8), 1167-1182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.2011134>,

# The Development, Implementation & Evaluation of Assessment Rubrics for Modules in Sport, Fitness, Coaching & Physical Education

THOMAS BRODERICK, EIMEAR FOLEY, DR. CON BURNS  
MTU DEPARTMENTS OF SPORT, LEISURE & CHILDHOOD STUDIES, & HEALTH &  
LEISURE STUDIES

## **Project Aims**

The project aim was to develop a set of common consistent performance criteria across a range of practical modules in the area of Sport, Fitness, Coaching and Physical Education to inform rubric design. Using these criteria we aimed to design, implement and evaluate a rubric that moderators use in a practical context using multiple means (e.g. online, pen/paper) to efficiently record and evidence students' grade and feedback.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

This intervention targeted practical modules across four programmes in MTU within the Cork and Kerry campuses. Within these programmes the rubric was implemented and evaluated across a variety of modules, namely: (i) Activity Leadership, (ii) Pedagogy of Net Games, (iii) Coaching Elite Sport, (iv) Body Conditioning, (v) Motor Development in Youth and, (vi) Foundations of Teaching and Learning in Physical Education.

A review and audit of current practices being used in relation to rubric design and structure identified that a wide range of rubric designs were being used; some using grade bands and specific criteria, while others used broader overall points with less specific criteria. Also, there was a disparity in the grading bands.

A series of cocreation sessions (n = 8) were conducted with students in the modules to develop the rubric. The common themes that emerged from this process were collated and circulated to staff for further staff development and refinement. This co-creation helped finalise the key criteria associated with practical modules. The final rubric was

then shared with students on the 6 target modules and students were given the opportunity to engage with and provide feedback on final rubric before implementation.

Once completed, the online rubric was disseminated to students to allow them to become familiar with the criteria for enhancement purposes (Figure 1).

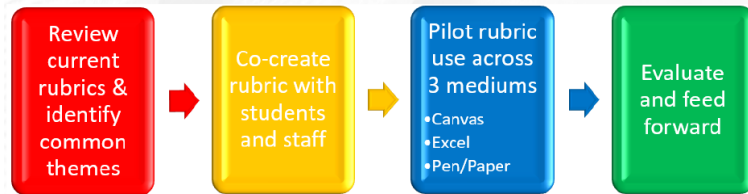


Figure 1: Order of steps involved in process

The rubric was then implemented and used in practical assessments. Depending on context and evaluator preferences either pen and paper, laptop using excel and online canvas rubric versions of the tool were used for the final practical assessments. The final component of the project involved a review survey being disseminated to the students via a Microsoft Online Form to assess their perceptions of the tool with a 66% (n=98) response rate (Figure 2). Staff who used the tool were also invited to give open ended feedback relating to their experiences using the tool.

## Evaluation & Impact

The online rubric was evaluated quantitatively, through use of the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (Gibbs & Dunbar-Goddet, 2007) with participating students.

The overall findings indicated a positive student experience in relation to the rubric:

- 88% agreed/strongly agreed that the rubric supported sufficient quantity of feedback.
- 61% agreed/strongly agreed the rubric supported their understanding of the mark they received.
- 86% agreed/strongly agreed the rubric assisted in guiding preparations and focusing on key criteria.
- 67% agreed/strongly agreed they felt involved and engaged in the rubric development.

Key themes which emerged from analysis of the open-ended question responses from student participants related to (i) rubric supporting and assisting guiding their preparation for the assessment, and, (ii) the cocreation element assisting student understanding of the key criteria. For example, students stated that the rubric ‘allows you to plan carefully’, a separate student responded that the process of it ‘being developed with students made it easier to understand’. The open-ended questions identified areas of improvement relating to a desire for a shorter more concise rubric which could be further discussed and explained in class.

The staff feedback was extremely positive, with one lecturer stating:

*‘I have successfully used this for delivery assessment, lesson plan submissions, reflection submission and a portfolio project throughout all three of my pedagogy modules this year. It has been a huge help in terms of clarity of criteria and key focus points in each module. It has allowed me to give specific and relevant feedback to students, in addition to students engaging in the feedback and reflection process themselves.’*

## **Summary & Reflection**

The research team on this project felt it was an extremely positive and worthwhile process. It is hoped that students will now be provided with a standardised rubric across practical modules in their programmes. The co-creation component was identified by both staff and students as an extremely worthwhile and useful exercise to identify and explain the key criteria.

Areas of improvement relate to simplification of rubric with key criteria simply stated supported by a drop-down menu with explanations of these key criteria. Furthermore, it is hoped that this tool will have a degree of flexibility (e.g. weighting of marks, different criteria) to provide staff with autonomy to use and apply the tool to a variety of contexts.

## Resources & References

Andrade, H. & Valtcheva, A. (2009). Promoting Learning and Achievement Through Self-Assessment. *Theory Into Practice*. 48. 12-19. 10.1080/00405840802577544.

Fraile, J. & Panadero, E. & Pardo, R. (2017). Co-creating rubrics: The effects on self-regulated learning, self-efficacy and performance of establishing assessment criteria with students. *Studies In Educational Evaluation*. 53. 69-76. 10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.03.003.

Gibbs, G., and H. Dunbar-Goddet. 2007. *The Effects of Programme Assessment Environments on Student Learning*. Oxfordshire, York: Higher Education Academy

Panadero, E. & Jönsson, A. (2013). The Use of Scoring Rubrics for Formative Assessment Purposes Revisited: A Review. *Educational Research Review*. 9. 129-144. 10.1016/j.edurev.2013.01.002.

Reddy, Y. & Andrade H. (2010) A review of rubric use in higher education, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35:4, 435-448, DOI: 10.1080/02602930902862859

## Part 3: Assessment and Feedback in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

This section examines assessment and feedback within Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), focusing on the critical transition between academic study and professional practice. Across disciplines like Counselling, Engineering, and Business, these studies implement tools such as Skills Development Action Plans, learning plans modelled on workplace training needs, and co-created clinical rubrics to align performance expectations. By clarifying exactly ‘what is being assessed and why’, these interventions help students secure placements more efficiently and identify professional ‘growing edges’. Central to this theme is the strengthening of trust-based partnerships between the Work-Integrated Learning stakeholders.

# A Co-Creative Approach to developing Assessment and Feedback rubrics in Clinical Work Practice

GERALDINE SHEEDY  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES

## Project Aims

Clinical Work Practice (placement) is an integral part of Counselling & Psychotherapy training. A key determinant of successful student outcome in placement is the quality of supervision they receive (Winchester Seeto et al, 2022). However, this module is supervised and assessed by external clinical supervisors who often lack skills around feedback and assessment. This project aims to

- i) Co-create (with students and supervisors) Assessment & Feedback rubrics along with clear guidelines on how to use these.
- ii) Implement training for new Supervisors on how to use these rubrics.

## Intervention & Implementation

This intervention was initiated in response to the need to improve assessment and feedback on the Placement Module of the BA Counselling & Psychotherapy programme. Following a formal review of Work Integrated Learning on our therapeutic training programmes (Sheedy & Clancy – in press) students and external supervisors expressed challenges with the delivery of feedback and assessment.

Observations and recommendations were gathered from students and clinical supervisors with both groups providing input on improvement. The Assessment & Feedback Rubrics were updated to better meet their learning and assessment needs. The newly developed rubrics were subsequently introduced to all students and supervisors on BA3 and BA4 with guidelines on how to use these.

Supervisors and Students were invited to complete the rubric in a collaborative fashion to ensure transparency and a shared understanding (Kilgour et al, 2019). It was also encouraged that time be put aside specifically for this in Supervision.

Whilst students and clinical supervisors were provided with instructions on the use of these rubric, targeted training for new supervisors was also delivered. Training workshops were conducted for five newly recruited external supervisors to familiarize them with the module and support their induction process. These workshops aimed to provide foundational knowledge and ensure a smooth transition into their roles. One of the aims of these workshops was to assist with the delivery of feedback (Handley, Price & Millar, 2008) and offer guidance on the use of the rubric.

The Rubric was distributed to 32 students and their Clinical Supervisors (n=15). Although the rubric was disseminated to all students and supervisors in Semester 1, not all engaged with its content or recognized its significance. In Semester 2, greater emphasis was placed on the document's importance, and all participants were actively encouraged to utilize it.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

All 15 clinical **supervisors** were invited to complete an anonymous questionnaire following using the rubric in their Summer 2025 assessment. Only **students** who were assessed in Summer 2025 were invited to complete the questionnaire (n=32). 9 Supervisors and 10 students responded to the questionnaire.

Student respondents described the rubric as easy to follow with one stating that it was *'really clear and concise'* and another indicated that it *offered a fully rounded framework to assess my practice*. A third student said *it was very helpful to ... talk through the different areas*. Students liked the collaborative nature of the rubric which helped to *facilitate self-reflection and open conversation*. One participant observed that it helped them to *easily discuss blind-spots and growing edges*. Students reported that the rubric helped them to focus on strengths and areas for development.

Supervisors were also in agreement that the rubric proved helpful in identifying *areas of strength and those needing development*. There was a sense that it facilitated a more *rounded view of the students' work*. One stated that the rubric *helped to focus and galvanise reflection in a more structured way*. This was echoed by another who added that *it gives me direction in assessing aspects of the students work that may not otherwise come up*. Whilst some supervisors found the rubric *wordy with too many questions*, they liked the way in which it provided *clear criteria for assessment* and *supported precision*.

Some supervisors reported that completing it was time consuming. This was largely due to not being familiar with the document and said that it may become easier over time. Supervisors and students called for more training in its use. One respondent suggested that it become *a living document helping students understand what will be expected of them when it comes to assessment*.

## **Summary & Reflection**

Overall, the rubric supported supervisors to assess students' performance more consistently as it broke down performance into distinct, observable criteria. Students particularly liked the way in which the rubric supported them in evaluating their individual progress and identifying areas for ongoing growth and development. Students and supervisors also liked this collaborative approach to assessment.

Not all supervisors or students engaged fully with the rubric, which is often characteristic of the early stages of introducing new practices. To enhance engagement in future iterations, it is recommended that the rubric become an integral part of the counselling skills training module. Improvements could also be achieved through the use of more concise and accessible language on the rubric.

Feedback suggests there may be a need for formal training to support effective use of the rubric. Facilitating a training session for supervisors and students could improve both engagement and consistency in its use. Feedback from the new supervisors who engaged in training was very positive – which further indicates the need for tailored training around its use for all supervisors.

## Resources & References

- Handley, K., Price, M., & Millar, J. (2008). Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback. *Final Report for FDTL5 Project 144/03*. Oxford Brookes University
- Kilgour, P., Northcote, M., Williams, A., & Kilgour, A. (2019). A plan for the co-construction and collaborative use of rubrics for student learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(1), 140–153.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2019.1614523>
- Sheedy, G. & Clancy, M (2025). Defining Therapeutic Clinical Placement Expectations: A training framework for enhancing clinical supervision. *International Journal of Work-Integrated-Learning*, 26(3), 407-424.
- Winchester-Seeto, T., Rowe, A.D & Mackaway, J. (2022). Effective Supervision. A key consideration in work-integrated learning. In *Advances in Research, Theory and Practice in Work-Integrated Learning*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003021049-11

# Impact of Student Voice, Co-Creation, Feedback and Peer-Assessment on Student Engagement and Learning

CATHERINE MURPHY, DENISE MCSWEENEY, ELAINE O'BRIEN & MICHELLE COLLINS  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING & INFORMATION SYSTEMS, & MARKETING &  
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

## Project Aims

Focus groups with our key stakeholders (host employers, MTU staff and students) have previously identified the following assessment and feedback challenges associated with our 30-credit Industry Placement module:-

- (i) lack of clarity for employers and expectations on grading
- (ii) timing of assessment, as placement length can vary from 15 weeks to up to 8 months
- (iii) lack of a structured approach to feedback.

The project aims to address these assessment and feedback issues by piloting interventions on Industry Supervisor Evaluation, Academic Supervisor Assessment and Reflection, in two undergraduate programmes (BBus (Hons) Information Systems, BBus (Hons) Marketing).

## Intervention & Implementation

The following are the key interventions implemented to improve assessment and feedback of the Industry Placement module:

### 1. Industry Supervisor Evaluation

Changes were made to existing practice, as follows (i) Employers provided with information on assessment and grading expectations in multiple forms, (ii) Microsoft Form used to evaluate students was simplified and mapped to learning outcomes, (iii) employers asked to complete an interim feedback form. The interim feedback form, grading and discussion of same with the student, contributes to the student's

development of the Skills Development Action Plan (see below). Discussion of the completed interim form with academic supervisors ensured clarity for completing the end-of-placement report.

## **2. Academic Supervisor Assessment**

Students were tasked with developing a Skills Development Action Plan, linked to the learning outcomes, midway through the placement. This plan would focus on Enterprise, Culture & Organisation, Written Communication, Verbal Communication, Teamwork, Initiative & Proactiveness and Application of Knowledge. In this plan, students identify their current proficiency and actions to meet their target proficiency, having discussed their interim feedback form with their employer.

## **3. Reflection**

Themed weekly reflections were introduced to guide the students' placement reflection. Themes included Leadership, Teamwork, Goal Setting, Learning from Mistakes and their Placement Legacy. Students were asked to view a video or Ted Talk relating to each theme and were tasked to reflect on this considering their own placement experience. This reflection replaced the previously used task of weekly student logs signed-off by employers.

Across all assessments, improved exemplars and rubrics were provided to assist students. Incorporating UDL principles, students were also given greater choice in terms of submission format for reflections and for career preparation documents; written, audio and video format.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

Qualitative analysis was carried out with a focus group. Ten work placement supervisors volunteered to participate in an employer focus group. When asked about their level of understanding of their role at the start of placement, 20% felt they had a very good understanding of their role as a supervisor, 50% reported a good level of understanding, with 30% reporting some understanding.

Replacing the weekly student log signed-off by the employer with the reflection (with no employer sign-off) was discussed, with some employers not in favour of this change as they found logs useful to gauge understanding of tasks and for student accountability and they felt disconnected from knowing how the student felt. It is important to note however that some employers felt the move away from logs was favourable, as they found them an inefficient use of their time given the content of the logs.

Employers found the grading scale on the interim feedback form very clear and had a clearer understanding of where a student sits in terms of grade. Employers felt more confident and competent using the academic rating scale. Use of the interim form was viewed by employers as giving students time to improve. However, organisations where students do longer placements, felt the timing was challenging as the student may not have exposure to tasks that align with what was included in the interim feedback form and the Skills Development Action Plan. While all employers engaged and provided interim feedback, 36% of employers chose not share the actual grade with the student.

## **Summary & Reflection**

There are varied practices on how students receive feedback on their performance in industry placement, with employers lacking clarity in their role. The interventions piloted in this project improve employer understanding on grading students in industry placement, prompted discussions between employer and students' mid-way through the placement to allow students improve and develop a Skills Development Action Plan.

While the piloted interventions were effective in some regards, there are still areas for improvement, particularly around addressing supervisor concerns regarding use of reflective work. This work is being continued in RAFT2, and scaled-up in a TUTF funded project to examine university wide experience of assessment and feedback on placement.

## **Resources & References**

C. Murphy, D. McSweeney, M. Collins, E. O'Brien (2022) Innovative Assessment and Feedback Strategies Impacting Key Stakeholders in Relation to the Industry Placement Module in the School of Business Undergraduate Programmes, ICERI2022 Proceedings, pp. 835-842, doi:10.21125/iceri.2022.0253

# Using a Learning Plan as a Tool to Enhance Student Engagement & Performance in a Capstone Engineering Laboratory Module

DR. AISLING O'GORMAN  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF PROCESS, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT

## **Project Aims**

This laboratory module incorporates investigative work on classical and novel unit operations and builds on learning from similar modules offered in the earlier years of the chemical engineering programme.

This project aims to improve student understanding of the module assessment, specifically what is being assessed, why it is being assessed and why a particular approach is being used.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

The stages of implementation were as follows:

### **1. Development of Learning Plan Structure**

A learning plan template was developed with three sections - identify gaps in skills/competences, propose strategy to help develop skills/competences identified and reflection

### **2. Initial Consultation with Fourth Year Students**

Fourth year students (n=4) agreed to act as consultants at this stage, to check whether the focus on development of skills and competencies would translate well to the third years and provide feedback on the structure of the learning plan.

### **3. Learning plan introduced to students during lab induction session**

The intervention and rationale for same was introduced and development of skills and competences discussed.

### **4. Implementation in module for all students**

Both module instructors implemented intervention, with 10% of mark for each practical allocated to the learning plan and rubrics revised accordingly.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

Students (n=16) were recruited to act as consultants, and two focus group sessions were held with 8 students in each. Students ranked the skills/competences they felt were important and then considered questions on the value of the learning plan, impact on practicals, feedback provided and views on focusing on individual strengths and weaknesses. The last part of the session was directed towards how the intervention as a whole was working and what could be changed.

## **Summary & Reflection**

I found that the students who volunteered to act as consultants for me were very interested in the fact that I was doing a piece of research and they seemed to be genuinely interested in supporting me. I wouldn't say that my thinking on my learning relationship with students has changed because it is already very positive but this work certainly reinforces the benefits of a partnership approach. Obviously for it to work well, there has to be trust and openness on both sides but I believe that students will always recognise when a sincere attempt is being made to consider their needs and their perspective.

Having the time allocation finally gave me the chance to carve out some space for myself to work on something that was very meaningful to me. It was great to feel that there was finally some recognition that work like this needs time. The structured briefings were also useful to keep me on track. Even at this stage in my career, it is good to reflect on my practice and how it may be improved. Some of the reading I have had time to do has given me some food for thought in this area.

# Do Peer Review & Role-Play Assist in Securing a Work Placement?

DR ALEX VAKALLOUDIS  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

## **Project Aims**

The aims of this project were:

1. To accelerate students securing a work placement.
2. To enrich students' employability soft skills such as critical-thinking, communication, evidence of self-motivation, and collaboration.
3. To advance students CV creation, job searching, skill matching and interview skills.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

In this project, we applied two active learning techniques, Collaborative Peer Review and Role Playing, in the form of a workshop series, to complement the existing work placement preparation services for students. Student participation was voluntary and expectations outlined in advance of study commencement.

For collaborative peer review, students were placed in groups of four and peer reviewed the CVs of their group members. Students then were tasked with reviewing job advertisements with a view to understanding the nature of the jobs and key skills required.

For the role-play intervention, mock interviews were arranged for students, but poor engagement limited impact. A student focus group to evaluate the intervention was held in January 2024.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

The primary objective was to accelerate securing a placement for the students. Compared to 2022 metrics, this was achieved, 6 (1 in 2022) found placements in October, 8 (6 in 2022) in November. 90% of the class submitted their CV for review in September versus 50% of the year before.

However, the engagement of the students to the activities was poor. 20% of the class did not attend any of the activities, another 50% participated partly. The number of CV review comments was low (1-2 per CV) and deemed to be of low quality. Reasons for this, gathered during the focus group, included students considering CV preparation to be a private task and preferring not to be aware of peers' progress and students' not comfortable working with peers especially face-to-face.

In relation to engagement with mock interviews, students acknowledged the value of these activities but noted a preference to improve their skills by trial and error in real interviews and many students felt too unprepared for a mock interview/role-play.

## **Summary & Reflection**

The active learning techniques applied have been reported elsewhere (Barthorpe and Hall, 2000; Sheridan and Linehan, 2013). The overall result was disappointing as multiple and diverse efforts took place to assure students that this was a safe, no negative criticism endeavour but it was met with poor engagement. However, there was improvement on students' awareness of the necessity to act efficiently in the work placement process to avoid missing opportunities. The idea of formalising these activities as module components for grading is currently being explored.

## **Resources & References**

Dunne, J. and Ryan, S.M., 2016. Enhancing professional development and supporting students on work-placement by peer-peer learning using an online reflective blog assessment. *Irish Journal of Academic Practice*, 5(1), p.1.

Graham, D., 2017. Embedding employability behaviours. *Journal of Work-Applied Management*, 9(1), pp.35- 50.

Barthorpe, S. and Hall, M., 2000. A collaborative approach to placement preparation and career planning for university students: a case study. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 52(2), pp.165-175.

Sheridan, I. and Linehan, M., 2013. A partnership approach to work placement in higher education.

Graham, D., 2017. Embedding employability behaviours. *Journal of Work-Applied Management*, 9(1), pp.35- 50.

van Eck, R., Jordaan, A. and Wadee, A.A., 2019, November. A Creative Pedagogy for Learner-Content Interactions as Work Placement Experience at Universities of Technology. In 2019 International Multidisciplinary Information Technology and Engineering Conference (IMITEC) (pp. 1-6).

Simkins, B. and Coney, K., What do graduate employers want in a Curriculum Vitae? Designing a student-friendly CV rubric that captures employer consensus.

Riebe, L. and Jackson, D., 2014. The use of rubrics in benchmarking and assessing employability skills. *Journal of Management Education*, 38(3), pp.319-344.

## Part 4: Peer-Assisted Learning and Feedback Literacies

This section explores the transition from a traditional ‘transmission’ model of feedback toward a learner-centred process where students actively engage with assessment standards. Drawing on case studies from Social Care, Computer Science, Agriculture, Management, Mechanical Engineering, Sport & Leisure and Architecture, these interventions demonstrate how peer-assisted learning transforms students from passive recipients into critical evaluators.

Key strategies include the use of ‘mock exam’ practicals to clarify marking criteria and the collaborative construction of scoring guides to help students recognize quality, such as ‘good code’. Research within this theme reveals a pivotal finding: providing high-quality feedback often has a greater measurable impact on a student’s own academic performance than receiving it, evidenced by a 10% average grade increase. By fostering feedback literacy and creating ‘safe spaces’ for informal dialogue, these case studies show how collaborative learning environments bridge the gap between initial drafts and professional-standard submissions.

# Implementing Peer Feedback in a First-Year Social Care Module

DR. ALISON MERROTSY  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES

## **Project Aims**

The aim of this project was to implement a peer-feedback intervention to enhance student learning in a first-year module. The project also sought to examine whether a peer-feedback intervention can:

1. Result in a measurable impact on student learning.
2. Impact on students' beliefs and attitudes towards peer review.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

Participants included all students (N = 84, males, n=12; females, n=72) enrolled in the first-year module Healthy Food & Recreation in MTU Cork. These students had no prior experience with peer-feedback in the context of an academic writing assignment.

During class time, students were introduced to peer-feedback as an instructional method through explanation, instruction, exercises, and formative peer-feedback activities. Students engaged with past examples of the written paper as well as the assessment criteria, to help them develop an understanding of expectations around quality so that they were better equipped to generate appropriate feedback. The peer review was worth 5% of their final grade, students needed to submit a draft in order to engage with the peer review.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

At the start of the semester, before students engaged with the peer-feedback intervention and again after they completed the peer-feedback activity, all participants

were invited to complete the validated Beliefs about Peer Feedback Questionnaire (Huisman et al., 2020). Table 1 summarises these results.

There was a statistically significant difference in the scores for students who completed peer reviews (N= 73; Average grade = 14.96) compared to those that did not (N=11; average grade = 7.53),  $p < 0.05$ . Marks for the assignment were out of a total possible score of 25% of the total module marks.

Theme	Pre-Intervention - % of respondents that selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree'	Post-Intervention - % of respondents that selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree'
Valuation of peer-feedback as an instructional method	75.9	68.5
Confidence in own peer-feedback quality	58.4	68.5
Confidence in quality of received peer-feedback	80.6	60.6
Valuation of peer-feedback as an important skill	87.0	82.2

Table 1: Summary of student responses to Beliefs about Peer-Feedback Questionnaire

## Summary & Reflection

A main finding is that these first-year students hold very positive perceptions of peer-feedback. In keeping with international data, the results of this study show that peer-feedback can positively impact student learning. Together, the impact and positive perceptions suggest that peer-feedback can and should be harnessed and utilised to help address the feedback problem in Ireland and support student learning (ISSE, 2022).

## Resources & References

- Particelli, B. (2020) Student-Led Assessment: A Small Study on Classroom Rubric Development and Peer Grading Practices, *Journal of Response to Writing*, 6(1), 3, 42-67.
- Huisman, B. et al. (2020) 'A questionnaire to assess students' beliefs about peer-feedback', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 57(3), pp. 328–338. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2019.1630294>.

ISSE (2022) *Irish Survey of Student Engagement National Report 2022, Irish Survey of Student Engagement*. Available at: <https://report.studentsurvey.ie/> (Accessed: 23 March 2023).

This case study was written up and published –

Merrotsy, A., Carey, W. & O’Mahony, T. (2025), ‘The impact of a peer-feedback intervention on the attitudes and beliefs of first-year Social Care students in Ireland’, *Practitioner Research in Higher Education*, 16(1), pp 38-49

A recording of Dr Alison Merrotsy discussing this project can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/MljCNfFpWQs>

Some guidelines on how to implement peer-feedback can be found in this short leaflet produced by ASKe (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange) from the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) based in the Business School at Oxford Brookes University: <https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/file/8956cbd9-510d-617a-9996-2c884b1bef8c/2/PeerFeedback.pdf>

# Development and Evaluation of a Structured Feedback Intervention to Support Students' Learning on a Personal Training Module

DR. SAM JERMYN  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, LEISURE & CHILDHOOD STUDIES

## **Project Aims**

This project engaged Personal Training students and staff in co-creating a formal feedback mechanism to ensure bi-weekly feedback was personalised, actionable, and supported ongoing learning. Feedback strategies were explored through focus groups, culminating in a reflective session evaluating the intervention's effectiveness and student experience.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

Participants in this project included 31 Recreation & Leisure Management (RL) students (males, n = 15; females, n = 16) and 18 Coaching Science & Sports Pedagogy (CSSP) students (males, n = 15; females, n = 3) from MTU Cork. Initially, RL students, who had previously completed the module, were consulted to identify key feedback areas relevant to their performance which would comprise the feedback mechanism. Identified areas included coaching (e.g., demonstrating, instructing, and providing feedback), programming (development of a 6-week training plan), interpersonal skills (interpersonal behaviour with client around their coaching), and client feedback (feedback obtained directly from the client as it concerned their experience of the personal training sessions).

The feedback mechanism was then developed and subsequently implemented with CSSP students, which was initiated in Week 5 of the subsequent semester as their 6-week client-based training intervention started. A bi-weekly personalised feedback session was trialled, whereby students engaged in small group-based discussions in class to generate feedback relating to coaching and programming. Feedback relating to interpersonal behaviour was provided by the delivery team on a bi-weekly basis, with

client feedback provided by the client in-person at the end of training sessions every two weeks. In Week 11, a focus group with the CSSP students took place to evaluate the mechanism's impact and inform future improvements.

## Evaluation & Impact

To evaluate the impact of the feedback mechanism, 18 Coaching Science & Sports Pedagogy students took part in a focus group discussion. Students were asked to discuss: (1) their perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the mechanism, (2) the appropriateness and practicality of frequency of feedback provided, (3) the relevance of the included thematic areas, if any other areas of performance are worth consideration for inclusion, and (4) general recommendations for further improvement. Table 1 provides a summary of the key outputs from this discussion as it concerns each of the key discussion points from the focus group session.

<b>Focus Group Discussion Point</b>	<b>Key Focus Group Outputs</b>
Strengths & weaknesses of feedback mechanism	<p>Strengths: Supportive, self-generated feedback, safe space</p> <p>Weaknesses: Obtaining constructive client criticism – suggest slight elaboration? e.g. Didn't adequately obtain/capture/encourage constructive client criticism due to face-to-face nature.</p>
Frequency of feedback provided	Bi-weekly is ideal – not overburdening but not too infrequent
Relevance of included thematic areas	All relevant; preference for client feedback to be sent to lecturer to support communication of more constructive criticism

General recommendations	Weekly lecturer-student touch points if student numbers allow
-------------------------	---

The feedback generated during this focus group was predominantly positive as students felt that the feedback mechanism supported their learning and was sufficiently comprehensive. The primary aspect of the mechanism that students believed is worth future alteration relates to client feedback, as many students felt that clients may be more willing to provide a greater amount of constructive criticism/feedback if it is communicated to the module delivery team as opposed to the student directly. While this is a feature of the module in Week 12, this is something that may be utilised more frequently throughout semester to accommodate this student request.

## Summary & Reflection

A primary finding from this project is that a formalised feedback mechanism, co-created between staff and students, is perceived by students to be effective at supporting their learning in an applied coaching module (i.e., Personal Training). These findings support the suggestion that student self-generated feedback (Andrade, 2019) and peer-generated feedback (Simonsmeier et al., 2020) are effective at supporting students in applied education settings. However, while students communicated the importance and value of them obtaining client feedback, it was communicated in the focus group that they would have welcomed a greater volume of constructive criticism from their clients, therefore more frequent direct engagement between the delivery team and clients to obtain this may need to be considered. While this project provides educators with an insight into the effectiveness of a co-created feedback mechanism for an applied coaching module, the nuances of this module need to be considered when generalising the findings to other higher education settings.

## Resources & References

Andrade, H. L. (2019, August). A critical review of research on student self-assessment. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 4, p. 87). Frontiers Media SA.

- Krueger, R. A. (1997). *Developing questions for focus groups*. Sage Publications.
- Rauf, A., Baig, L., Jaffery, T., & Shafi, R. (2014). Exploring the trustworthiness and reliability of focus groups for obtaining useful feedback for evaluation of academic programs. *Education for Health, 27*(1), 28-33.
- Simonsmeier, B. A., Peiffer, H., Flaig, M., & Schneider, M. (2020). Peer feedback improves students' academic self-concept in higher education. *Research in Higher Education, 61*(6), 706-724.

# How does Peer Feedback Impact Academic Performance?

SHARON LEHANE  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & ENTERPRISE

## Project Aims

The aim of this RAFT intervention was to implement a peer-feedback intervention in a first-year business management module with 65 students and explore how peer-feedback impacted academic performance. Specifically, this study has been framed around three research questions:

1. What are first-year business students' attitudes towards the peer-feedback process in general?
2. Does providing or receiving high quality peer-feedback have a measurable impact on performance?
3. Does peer-feedback training have an impact on peer-feedback quality?

## Intervention & Implementation

The assessment involved students working in groups of three or four to produce a written assignment. The assignment had four distinct sections, and each group member was to take responsibility for one section. Figure 1 illustrates the sequence of intervention activities, with each stage taking approximately one week to complete.

Students submitted a draft assignment prior to seeing the assessment rubric or exemplars to encourage creativity and ensure that student groups were not overly influenced by the exemplars.

The peer-feedback training was conducted in class over a two-hour period. Students were provided with a detailed assessment rubric or grading sheet, example assignment and then asked to use the rubric to identify strengths and limitations of the example assignment and draft example feedback. Students then discussed the assignment.

The lecturer's perspective on the assignment and the feedback that she would have provided was recorded and uploaded on Canvas. The assessment rubric, and exemplar was also provided on Canvas.

Student groups then provided and received peer feedback via the peer review function on Canvas. Each group was asked to provide peer-feedback on two other draft assignments and within each group, each individual was responsible for providing feedback on one section of the assignment.

To encourage engagement, 5% of the overall module grade was assigned to this task i.e. generating a draft of one section of the assignment and generating feedback for two other sections. The instructor did not provide any individual feedback on the assignment.

## Evaluation & Impact

A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate impact. This included a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire to measure students' general attitudes towards peer feedback. In addition, peer-feedback comments were analysed and categorised as none (0), generic comments (1), identifying some specific positive or negative aspect (2) and providing constructive feedback (3). Each assignment had four sections with 2 peer reviewers per section resulting in peer-feedback quality ratings ranging from 0 to 24. The draft assignment was graded, as was the final assignment both of which were worth 45%.

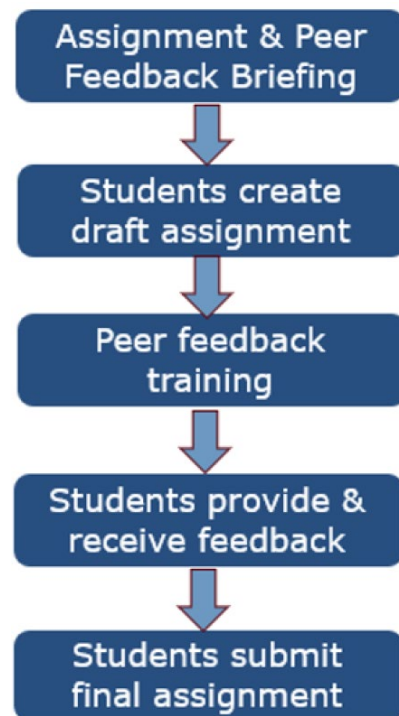


Figure 1: Peer-feedback process

Table 1 presents these results for the whole cohort along with an analysis by quartile ordered based on the grade change. Participants attitudes towards peer-feedback were found to be broadly positive prior to the peer-feedback intervention and improved slightly afterwards.

Peer-feedback had a substantial impact with the average final grade increasing by 10%. Attendance at the in-person training event had a statistically significant impact on the quality of feedback that was generated. A statistically significant relationship was found between the final grade and the quality of feedback generated but not the quality of feedback received.

Group Description	Final Grade	Draft Grade	Grade Change	Feedback Quality Provided	Feedback Quality Received	% of Groups Attending In-Person Training
	(max. 45)	(max. 45)	(max. 45)	(max. 24)	(max. 24)	
	Mean (%)	Mean (%)	Mean (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean (%)
Total Cohort (N=65)	33	23	10	16	15	71
Top Quartile (N=12)	39	20	19	21	16	100
Second Quartile (N=19)	36	21	16	18	14	100
Third Quartile (N=14)	32	25	7	11	16	50
Bottom Quartile (N=16)	24	22	1	14	14	25

Table 1: Summary of results recorded (quartiles ordered by grade improvement)

## Summary & Reflection

Participants generally positive attitudes towards peer-feedback along with its positive impact on performance suggests that peer-feedback should be used more widely across higher education. Note that the 10% improvement recorded was solely due to peer feedback – the instructor did not provide any individual feedback. The second somewhat counter-intuitive results is the impact of generating peer-feedback. The likely reason for this is that to generate high quality feedback, students must understand the assessment criteria and expectations associated with assessment and be able to apply that understanding to other assignments. If they can do that successfully for other assignments, they will then be able to do it for their own assignment. Hence, peer-

feedback is less about ‘gifting’ feedback to others and more about developing a critical understanding of what good work looks like.

## **Resources & References**

This case study was written up and published –

Lehane, S., & O’ Mahony, T. (2025). How does peer feedback impact academic performance? An empirical investigation in an undergraduate business context. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 15(3), 532–550. <https://doi-org.mtu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/21568235.2024.2402361>

# An Exploration of Collaborative Essay-Writing as a Mechanism for Supporting Skills Development & Enhancing Feedback Effectiveness in Larger Classes

MARY LEONARD  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

## Project Aims

This intervention aimed to:

1. Create a learning environment that promotes a sense of belonging and encourages collaborative learning.
2. Provide students in larger class groups with feedback tailored to their specific needs.
3. Support basic academic skills development through a process of ongoing practice, feedback and application of feedback.
4. Involve students in adapting module resources to their preferences.

## Intervention & Implementation

This intervention was carried out in the Academic and Professional Communication module with Social Care Year One students.

Students worked in small groups with the aim of producing a collaborative whole-class essay. The intention was that the small groups would then analyse and label various aspects of the essay, such as paragraph structure and academic writing style, creating an exemplar essay with analysis of component parts, which they could use as a resource in their individual essays for this and later modules.

The groups worked through various stages of essay-writing (such as finding sources and applying searching and evaluation skills), with peer feedback through small group discussion at each stage. The lecturer interacted with each group and gave feedback on demand and there was also whole-class discussion of activities. Resources were

provided on Canvas to support each stage, with opportunity for students to request additions or changes to existing material to maximise its usefulness to them.

The intention was to assign students to groups semi-randomly, so there was more interaction outside friendship groups and between school-leavers and mature students. However, students were reluctant to be separated from their friends, so groups were allowed to self-select.

The collaborative essay-writing process took longer than planned, notably due to the time involved in locating suitable sources. As a result, the collaborative essay was not completed. However, towards the end of the module, a sample essay with analysis of the various components was made available to students on Canvas.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

Qualitative evaluation of this intervention was carried out with a student focus group. Topics explored in the focus group included to what extent students felt the group work helped their skills development, reasons why/why not and suggestions for developing this/other approaches that students felt would be helpful.

The participants found working in small groups very beneficial. They learned a lot from each other, through observing the various ways individuals and groups approached the same task, reflecting on their own approach and exploring additional/alternative strategies that worked well. They found the small groups made it easier to ask the lecturer questions because they knew everyone in the group had the same question and because the groups let them get to know the lecturer better, creating a more relaxed atmosphere.

They noted that some groups were more focused, with some distracted by working with friends and others becoming less motivated when they realized the collaborative essay wasn't being graded. The focus group recommended a mix of ages, non-friends etc. in groups, while acknowledging this would be difficult for some students. They also felt the group essay should be assessed if marks could be allocated fairly.

There was disappointment that the collaborative essay wasn't completed. The participants felt significant time was lost locating sources and suggested ways of making this more manageable. They also said each group should write a separate essay, which they believed could have been completed.

There was a very positive response to the sample essay/analysis. The participants felt it should have been available from the start and would have helped with the collaborative essay and other assignments. The participants didn't support the idea of making student-led changes to Canvas, as they felt the material provided was clear and easy to follow and changes could be difficult to manage.

## **Summary & Reflection**

This intervention confirmed that having a sample essay with analysis of component parts is a valuable tool for students and that working in small groups helped to achieve a more intimate learning environment, which in turn facilitated student-to-student and lecturer-to-student feedback and student learning. It would be beneficial for students to have the sample essay available from the start. Writing a group essay in small groups, rather than as a whole class, would be more manageable while still facilitating peer learning and feedback from the lecturer. More diverse groups and assessment of the group essay would encourage engagement and motivation.

## **Resources & References**

Boud, D. and Dawson, P., 2023. What feedback literate teachers do: an empirically-derived competency framework. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, [e-journal] 48(2), pp.158-171. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2021.1910928

Felder, R.M. and Brent, R., 2007. Cooperative learning. *Active learning: Models from the analytical sciences*, 970, pp.34-53. Available at:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279336523\\_Cooperative\\_Learning](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279336523_Cooperative_Learning)

Hendry, G.D., White, P. and Herbert, C., 2016. Providing exemplar-based 'feedforward' before an assessment: the role of teacher explanation. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 17(2) 99-109.

Nicol, D., 2007. Principles of good assessment and feedback: theory and practice. [pdf]  
Available at  
[https://www.reap.ac.uk/reap/public/papers/Principles\\_of\\_good\\_assessment\\_and\\_f  
eedback.pdf](https://www.reap.ac.uk/reap/public/papers/Principles_of_good_assessment_and_feedback.pdf)

# Programming Scoring Guide Creation & Application for First Year Computer Science Students

DR. ALISON O'SHEA  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

## **Project Aims**

This study seeks to introduce first year computer science students to programming assessment standards. Throughout computer science degree programmes, a student's programming skills will be assessed using rubrics and scoring guides that are shared as part of the assignment specification. The focus of this intervention is to help students to see the importance of understanding the tasks denoted in an assignment, give them an opportunity to question the scoring guides they are presented with, and to develop skills in recognising and writing good code.

Increased understanding of rubrics and scoring guides will give students an appreciation of what 'good' means. By gaining self-analytical skills in one area of computer science, programming, these skills could be translated into other subjects and assessment types.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

As part of this intervention students created scoring guides for lab exercises. SOFT6018 (Programming Fundamentals) students have 3 hours of lab time each week in groups of 18-20.

In this intervention, students are asked to design a rubric, they discuss their rubrics in groups of 2 or 3, and then give feedback on a classmate's code. The students also receive feedback on their own code.

The following directions were given to students:

1. Complete the exercise. guide.
2. Create a scoring guide based on the exercise and on your experience of creating a solution to the exercise (allocate between 10 and 15 marks)
3. Discuss your scoring guides in pairs. Compare the way you distributed your marks and ensure that you fully understand that tasks outlined in your partner's scoring guide. If you need to add more clarification to your scoring guide at this stage, then please do that.
4. Use your scoring guide to assess the other person's solution. Take a note of the parts of their solution that gain them marks, also note any suggested improvements that they could make to their code. *Note: students were NOT asked to give a numeric score.*

See Fig. 1 for an example description of the task given to students on Canvas. Later in the semester this task of scoring guide creation and application was augmented by introducing students to the Learning Outcomes (available on the Module Descriptor) and asking students to map the practical skills being demonstrated in the lab to these Learning Outcomes, see Fig. 2.

## 7. GROUP EXERCISE 🤝 (please wait for me to initiate this exercise)

In exercise 1, you wrote code to determine the outcome of a match. If you were a lecturer and you were in charge of evaluating student's code how would you assign marks for this exercise? Consider the importance of code functionality (does the code do what it is meant to do?), code readability (choice of variable identifiers, comments, clear layout).

You have 10 marks to give for successful completion of this exercise, create a rubric for these 10 marks. Write your completed rubric down and clearly define each gradable component and the marks assigned to it.

Once you have completed your rubric discuss it with your neighbour. After your discussion use the rubric to evaluate your neighbour's code. Ensure you point out to good things that they did that gained them marks. Make a note of the improvements they could make in future iterations of their code.

Figure 1. An example of the scoring guide creation instructions as given to students during their labs.

## 7. GROUP EXERCISE 🦄 (please wait for me to initiate this exercise)

First, please complete this survey based on your experience of the first in lab assessment <https://vevox.app/#/m/114729789>

In exercise 3, you wrote code to analyse the content of a string and count the number of alphabetic characters and the number of punctuation characters. If you were a lecturer and you were in charge of evaluating student's code how would you assign marks for this exercise?

What types of skills are you expecting the student to demonstrate in this exercise? The table below shows the expected Learning Outcomes from this module, which Learning Outcomes are being explored in this exercise?

SOFT6018 Learning Outcomes	
LO1	Determine the outcome of programs, written in a high-level programming language, that utilise basic programming concepts and constructs.
LO2	Implement solutions to programming tasks by identifying necessary variables and constants and choosing appropriate data types for these variables and constants.
LO3	Choose appropriate sequential, conditional and iterative constructs for a given task.
LO4	Implement solutions to programming tasks that require files.
LO5	Test and debug programs developed.
LO6	Document code using best practices and conventions.

You have 10 marks to give for successful completion of this exercise, create a rubric for these 10 marks. Write your completed rubric down and clearly define each gradable component and the marks assigned to it.

Once you have completed your rubric discuss it with your neighbour. After your discussion use the rubric to evaluate your neighbour's code. Ensure you point out to good things that they did that gained them marks. Make a note of the improvements they could make in future iterations of their code. You should also let the student know the Learning Outcomes that they have demonstrated.

Figure 2. An example of the scoring guide creation instructions with the module Learning Outcomes listed.

### Evaluation & Impact

The results can be separated into observed results and survey feedback. Firstly, from observing the process during weekly labs, I found:

- Students were often tempted to assign a numeric score to others' work. This is not inherently negative, but it was not the intention of the intervention.
- Students were considerate about giving feedback. They were guided to always start with something positive and to give suggestions in a supportive and helpful way; from my observations this advice was followed.
- Students worked in groups, all engaged with the task and with their assigned pair. Pairings were reshuffled on a weekly basis to give students a diverse viewpoint.

Secondly, the results of the survey can be analysed. The survey was distributed to an email list of 70 students, there were 8 responses (11% response rate).

- When asked if they understand the requirements of SOFT6018 and their ability to create good code almost all students answered positively. Fig. 3 shows that just one student said that they were not confident in their ability to recognise good code.
- Students noted that there were opportunities to give and receive feedback during the module. All were clear on how the Learning Outcomes relate to the assignments.
- When asked if they had used the skills developed in creating, reviewing, and applying scoring guides in other modules, most students answered no (2-yes/6-no). However, there were two students that answered ‘no’ but noted these skills could be useful in future. One student said *‘We have not but that doesn’t take away from how I think [the RAFT intervention] was great. Being able to break down our code into particular points that make it good or bad helps me put weight to more important aspects of my code, readability vs functionality for example.’*

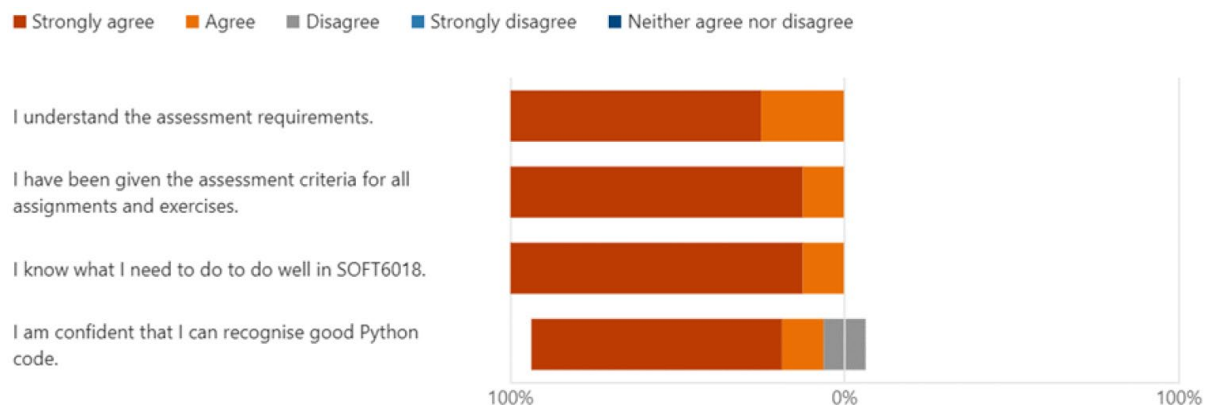


Figure 3. Student responses to questions about their understanding of the assessment requirements for SOFT6018.

## Summary & Reflection

From observations and feedback, I believe that the students have gained the ability to identify good code and interpret the requirements in future coding assignments. These skills may have been gained through the regular module delivery, but by including this intervention the skills were centred and highlighted during practical lab sessions.

From the feedback, some students did not understand the benefits of the exercise; when asked how module assessment could be improved one student said “perhaps grading one another’s work felt a bit pointless at times but I’m sure others felt it was useful”. In future iterations the intervention could be reframed to explain the benefits and make it more engaging.

It is increasingly important that students can discern good code and understand the exact assignment requirements, especially in the age of widespread generative AI tools that parrot expected outputs without understanding context (Bull 2023).

## **Resources & References**

Bull, C., & Kharrufa, A. (2023). Generative AI Assistants in Software Development Education: A vision for integrating Generative AI into educational practice, not instinctively defending against it. *IEEE Software*.

# Enhancing the Clarity of Practical Agricultural Assessments via a Practice Assessment

CLIVE ATKINSON  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF PROCESS ENERGY & TRANSPORT ENGINEERING

## **Project Aims**

This intervention aimed to develop a 'mock exam' situation for practical assessments with students in the Land Mechanisation module which forms part of the first year of the BSc in Agriculture degree programme. The expectation is that the mock exam would help to raise student awareness of and clarify critical assessment aspects during specific practical assessments.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

The design of the intervention was informed by the literature which emphasises how clarity of the assessment task is often lacking (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The literature also evidences that actively engaging students in exemplars can enhance students' understanding of the assessment task along with the standard associated with it (To et al., 2022).

To transfer these ideas into practical, performance assessments the intervention was structured so that one student would observe a second student completing the practical task. The student observing would complete the marking or gradings sheet based on their judgement regarding the quality of task performance. The students were then re-assigned to a different 'marker' when it was their turn to complete the practical task to avoid a situation where one may be influenced by the other if they were just marking each other in pairs. I as supervisor also observed and marked the practical according to the usual criteria. Subsequently we compared and discussed the allocated marks to help clarify the quality of performance during the assessment.

Unfortunately, the agreed date for this intervention coincided with the traditional 'Christmas day' and it meant that student numbers were smaller than normal. While initially this was viewed as a negative issue, on reflection it may have been the case the students present actually gained more from the intervention as more time was allowed for the assessments.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

During discussion with RAFT team member after the intervention, it was agreed that given the smaller number of participants it would make little sense to conduct the intended surveys, etc. Instead, it was agreed that more informal discussion with those students who participated be carried out when the students returned for semester two.

Feedback from the students who participated was very positive towards the intervention, in that they believed that they gained a useful insight into the marking criteria and ratings. An interesting point of note was that the student marking overall was very close to that of the lecturer and if anything was more stringent given that in a few instances the marks awarded by the students towards their comrades was slightly lower than the mark awarded by the lecturer. Overall, though the marks correlated closely, and the participants confirmed that the nature of the marking template used was suitable and provided clarity for students. The participants believed that undertaking the exercise was beneficial and raised their awareness of the actual criteria being used for the actual practical assessment.

## **Summary & Reflection**

While initially the lower student numbers was deemed an issue, on reflection, if the full group had been present it may not have been possible to spend as much time going through the processes with all the students in one day and as such it ended up as being more suitable to have smaller numbers. (Initially it had been planned to have a group of three to assess and mark one other person, however, the way it worked out on the day each person was given the opportunity to be both assessed and an assessor). No definitive conclusion can be drawn as to whether the final practical assessment marks

received by participants were attributable to the intervention, or due to the diligent attitudes of those who were present on the day when others were not, however, the overall conclusion is that it was a worthwhile exercise.

## **Resources & References**

- Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 31*(2), 199–218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572090>
- To, J., Panadero, E., & Carless, D. (2022). A systematic review of the educational uses and effects of exemplars. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47*(8), 1167–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.2011134>

# Impact of Student Voice, Co-Creation, Feedback & Peer-Assessment on Student Engagement & Learning

DEIRDRE RYAN  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

## Project Aims

The aim of this project was to trial a number of approaches to improving student engagement and learning:

1. Co-creation of a grading rubric
2. Peer assessment
3. Offering students choice in how they presented their learning
4. Provision of timely feedback.

These methods were selected to be considered as they combine UDL, promote student engagement with feedback and facilitate active learning.

## Intervention & Implementation

Eight architectural technology students participated in the intervention.

The key implementation stages were:

1. Module learning outcomes and assessment requirements were reviewed, with students given examples of suitable topics but advised they could select any relevant, justifiable topic other than listed options, with lecturer guidance. Students also informed that once they met the learning outcomes, they had choice in how they represented their learning in that final submission, with possible options highlighted (information paper, website, poster, research paper, Powerpoint presentation, model). Students then researched exemplars of the different format types.

2. Students were aware from Week 2 that they were going to present their research to their peers at the end of the semester and that peer assessment was to form part of the grading process. Concepts of assessment as/of/for learning, holistic and analytical rubrics, and what grades represent was introduced to students. Mid-semester, the lecturer and student together formulated rubric criteria with descriptions and a weighting for each of the components to be assessed.
3. Students were given the opportunity to do a dry-run of their presentations in order that they could get feedback from peers and lecturer.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

The intervention was evaluated qualitatively, initially based on in-class observations during the 12-week delivery period and subsequently via a focus group after module completion.

In-class observations indicate that students met the idea of having choice on topic selection and how learning was to be represented with some hesitation as first, but ultimately it was welcomed. Students were more actively engaged and vocal than in the past and appreciated being involved in co-creating the grading rubric; they engaged enthusiastically in the process initially but as the exercise continued interest waned and I had to complete it. Peer-assessment resulted in combined grades of students being 11% higher than the lecturers mark, resulting in the overall module mark being c. 6% higher than if peer assessment had not taken place. I believe this is within an acceptable range and am satisfied with the student/staff weighting.

A one-hour focus group after the module was completed was undertaken by an independent party to evaluate students' opinions on the effectiveness of the interventions and explore the overall student experience. Surprisingly, students referred to the rubric co-creation as group work, and although this was not group work in the traditional sense, perhaps working together on the rubric helped us all connect. However, on the flip side it possibly also made it more difficult for them to be objective when it came to peer-to-peer assessment.

Students acknowledged that this module offered something different and they referred to the freedom it gave them. Students welcomed the opportunity to be involved in co-creation, that the process of grading their peers helped them learn from each other and reduced their anxiety in relation to their own impending presentations. They did acknowledge that they would have designed the grading rubric differently, they did not find it very intuitive when assessing their peers and that they should have more carefully considered the format of their final submission.

## **Summary & Reflection**

In my opinion, the process and the product are two separate entities. The final product may not have differed significantly from the previous year but the process, because it was more inclusive, seems to have had a beneficial impact on the students. Co-creation led to greater engagement and as a result it may be fitting to assume that the students stayed more involved with the module because of it and thus, they themselves performed better than if it had not been offered.

In subsequent iterations of this module, I would ensure that the students understand the grading rubric they are engaging with. I need to reflect on the format of the final presentation as the students did not seem to be able to distinguish between the research undertaken and the dissemination of that research. In terms of my own teaching practice, I am confident that there is a place for co-creation going forward and I would like to enable that within other modules in the Department.

Assessment beyond assessment of learning is crucial in third level education.

## **Resources & References**

Deeley, S J, (2014) Summative co-assessment: A deep learning approach to enhancing employability skills and attributes, *Active Learning in Higher Education* 15(1):39-51.

Nicol, D. (2007) Principles of good assessment and feedback: Theory and practice. REAP International Online Conference on Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, 29th - 31st May 2007.

# The Impact of using Rubrics and Exemplars in a Fluid Dynamics Module

DR. BRIAN HAND  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

## **Project Aims**

The objectives of this project were to:

1. Develop rubrics and exemplars for students completing the Fluid Dynamics module.
2. Explore the student experience of using rubrics and exemplars and determine if they are beneficial for completing the outlined module assignment.
3. Assess if the student response and perception to using rubrics and exemplars changes with time.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

There were 3 key stages to this intervention, as described below.

### **Stage 1: Materials Development**

In Week 5, the assignment and an associated rubric, for the Fluid Dynamics module was created. The rubric showed the allocation of marks for each part of the assignment and the grading structure for an 'exemplary', 'proficient', 'developing', or 'unsatisfactory' report. Exemplar reports were developed also.

### **Stage 2: Assignment explanation**

In Week 9, a hardcopy of the assignment brief was given to each student. The lecturer discussed the assignment in detail with the students, with particular emphasis on the submission, as the report was written as an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers scientific article.

### **Stage 3: Rubric and exemplars**

Rubric and exemplars were made available to the students on Canvas and discussed in detail. Students engaged with exemplars as well as the assessment criteria, to help them develop an understanding of the expectations around and assignment structure.

## Evaluation & Impact

Quantitative analysis was carried out at two time points; (1) after receiving the assignment, rubric, exemplars and (2) after assignment submission deadline.

After receiving the assignment, rubric and exemplars, students (n=55) were invited to complete an anonymous 10-question online questionnaire to explore the impact of the rubric and exemplars on the students at the time of receiving the assignment. 38 students completed the questionnaire in-class. After the submission deadline had passed, the students were asked again to complete the questionnaire on their experience of the rubric and exemplars for the assignment. This questionnaire was completed by 40 students.

Before completing the assignment, the majority of the students agreed the rubric would have a beneficial impact on improving the quality of their assignment (Figure 1). There was a change in the student response after completing the assignment, as students neither agreed nor disagreed the rubric had an impact on the quality of their assignment, at this stage. A similar response trend was found for the impact of the exemplar in improving assignment quality.

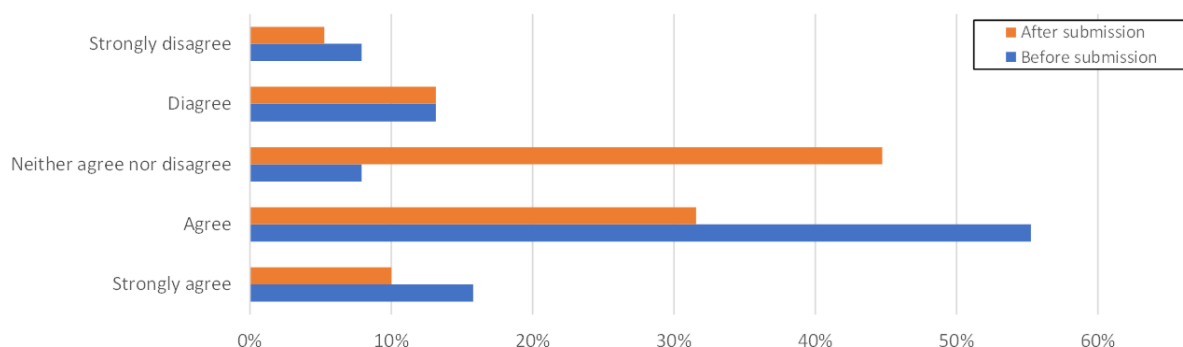


Figure 1: Pre and Post Exploration of Rubric Impact

## **Summary & Reflection**

I found the RAFT programme beneficial as it was engaging and very supportive. The online delivery, recordings and activities assisted me in conducting my intervention. My involvement in RAFT has impacted on my other modules and I have used rubrics and exemplars in my other modules, which has had a positive impact on both student results and engagement. One of the main standout moments for me during my intervention was when I was explaining the rubric to my students was their realisation the difference between excellent quality assignment and unsatisfactory assignment.

## **Resources & References**

- Y. M. Reddy and H. Andrade, "A review of rubric use in higher education," *Assess. Eval. High. Educ.*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 435–448, 2010, doi: 10.1080/02602930902862859.
- F. J. Schneider, "Rubrics for teacher education in community college.," *Community Coll. Enterp.*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 39–55, 2006, [Online]. Available: <http://navigator-mansfield.passhe.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=22681452&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- D. Petkov and O. Petkova, "Development of Scoring Rubrics for Projects as an Assessment Tool across an IS Program," *Proc. 2006 InSITE Conf.*, no. October, 2006, doi: 10.28945/2941.

## Part 5: Academic Integrity and Emerging Technologies

This section examines the evolving landscape of assessment in the era of Generative AI and the critical role of academic integrity. Rather than focusing on policing, these case studies emphasize building AI literacy and trust-based partnerships. In Marketing, embedding AI into authentic tasks allowed students to negotiate the boundary between AI assistance and their own intellectual contribution, with 80% reporting increased confidence through practical use. Similarly, in Human Resource Management, open-book assessments were utilized to counter integrity challenges while promoting autonomy and real-world application.

Beyond digital tools, this theme explores how oral defenses and co-created presentation rubrics shift the focus from memorization to genuine understanding. In Physics labs, oral assessments provided immediate feedback, testing scientific reasoning rather than rote recall. These interventions show that the integration of student voice can foster a sense of professional identity and ethical responsibility.

# Integrating Ethical AI Use in Academic Assessment

CLÍÓNA MOYNIHAN  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING & INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

## **Project Aims**

This project aimed to investigate student attitudes, confidence, and ethical awareness when using generative AI in assessment. By embedding AI into an authentic assessment task, the objective was to enhance AI literacy, deepen understanding of ethical issues, and promote academic integrity. The goal was to better understand both the learning benefits and the challenges students face when navigating unclear institutional policies on AI use.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

The intervention was delivered as part of a first year module in which 44 students were enrolled. Students were taught about several generative AI tools, their applications, and ethical implications before being encouraged to use these tools to complete a formal assessment. Rather than prescribing exact rules, the students were provided broad guidance to help critically evaluate the scope of permissible use. This approach reflected the wider context of evolving institutional policy, where clarity and consistency are still emerging.

Students were explicitly trusted to make their own ethical decisions about how to integrate AI into their work. This trust was itself a pedagogical choice, intended to promote responsibility and integrity while also reducing the stigma and anxiety often associated with AI use in education.

The evaluation combined quantitative and qualitative data in a survey (completed by 13 students). Questions explored student confidence, perceptions of clarity around AI use, the impact on learning, and their reflections on being trusted.

By embedding AI in a live assessment task, the intervention provided a rich opportunity for students to develop both technical skills and ethical reasoning. This practical, reflective approach helped surface student concerns about academic integrity and highlighted the gaps between module-level practices and institutional policy.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

Of the 44 registered students, 13 completed the survey. Survey data revealed that confidence in using AI for assessment was initially mixed: while 46% reported confidence at the outset, many were neutral or anxious. However, 80% agreed that their confidence improved through practical use. Students overwhelmingly reported that AI enhanced their learning (77% agreed or strongly agreed), deepened understanding (77%), and improved the overall experience (86%).

Qualitative responses provided further insight. Many students reported drawing the ethical line where their own contribution ended, typically using AI for idea generation, organisation, or explanation but rewriting in their own words. They described feeling ‘not like cheating’ when AI was used transparently and ethically. Importantly, being trusted was consistently highlighted as a positive influence: it made assessments ‘less daunting’, improved confidence, and motivated students to uphold integrity.

A striking theme concerned authorship and ownership. Students consistently described creating their own ‘lines’ for ethical use, for example, only using AI for idea generation or structuring, but ensuring the final text was in their own words. Several students imposed personal rules, such as ‘I draw the line when it feels like I did nothing’. This indicates that students actively negotiated the boundary between AI assistance and their own intellectual contribution.

A key theme was uncertainty. While students felt supported within this module, 77% expressed uncertainty about AI use in other modules, and all agreed that institutional policies beyond this class were unclear. Many worried about unintentionally breaching academic integrity in other contexts.

Overall, the intervention demonstrated that when trust and structured reflection are embedded, AI can enhance learning and integrity. However, it also highlighted the urgent need for consistent, institution-wide policy to address student uncertainty.

## Summary & Reflection

This case study shows the value of embedding generative AI into assessment under conditions of guided trust. Students reported greater confidence, deeper learning, and a stronger sense of integrity when trusted to make ethical decisions. The approach also surfaced key areas of student anxiety, particularly around inconsistent or unclear institutional policies.

While the intervention successfully enhanced AI literacy and ethical awareness in one module, the broader implication is that students require coherent institutional frameworks that go beyond individual classroom practices. This ensures that confidence and integrity can be sustained across their academic journey.

## Resources & References

AI in Higher Education (AlinHE), 2024. Students' perspectives on AI in higher education. 2024 HEDx Future Solutions Conference. AlinHE.org. Available at: <https://www.aiinhe.org> (Accessed: 11 June 2025).

Perkins, M., Furze, L., Roe, J. and MacVaugh, J., 2024. The Artificial Intelligence Assessment Scale (AIAS): A framework for ethical integration of generative AI in educational assessment. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(6). <https://doi.org/10.53761/q3azde36>

Page, E., Meyers, G., & Billings, E., 2024. Theory to Practice: An Assessment Framework for Generative AI.. *Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.61669/001c.124250>

# Assessing the Impact of an Oral Defence in Undergraduate Physics Laboratories

DR SVETLANA SLEPNEVA  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL SCIENCES

## Project Aims

This intervention will introduce an oral defence as part of the assessment of laboratory work in the module PHYS6021 Mechanics and Electromagnetism.

The objectives of this intervention are to enhance students' oral skills relating to scientific discussion, enhance students' engagement with the laboratory, provide immediate feedback and provide insights into how well students understand the material.

## Intervention & Implementation

This intervention focuses on introducing an oral defence into the physics laboratory for the module PHYS6021 Mechanics and Electromagnetism. For this intervention, oral assessment was used with two selected labs at the end of the lab course. Two groups of 15 students in total were made for the oral defence, with each group defending a different lab. Students were put in pairs and provided with sample theory questions to guide preparation, and given 40 minutes to collect thoughts and prepare answers (open-book).

During the defence discussion, students were explaining the experiment, the underlying physics, relevant formulas, the measurements and their results, providing scientific reasoning for the obtained results, explaining errors and discrepancies. Students used their written laboratory report to support their oral defence. The lecturer facilitated the discussion and asked additional questions to help or to test the knowledge and explained where necessary. Other students completed the answers if needed.

Following the defence, students reviewed their reports.

The following semester, the effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated quantitatively, based on established survey instruments, including: 18 questions in the form of statements with a five-point agree-disagree response scale; the Assessment Experience Questionnaire - 10 open-ended questions about personal experience. 15 students who participated in the defence were invited to participate. Five students completed the first survey, while only 2 students completed the open-ended questions.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

Engagement with the intervention evaluation was limited, with only 33.33% (n=5) of intervention participants completing the surveys. Brief qualitative conclusions are as follows: Students felt –

- the assessment tested understanding, rather than what students had memorised
- it was not clear what to expect from the assessment
- the assessment was helpful in understanding the syllabus content and can be applied to other topics
- it required effort to prepare for the assessment
- they received clear feedback on their work during the assessment
- feedback was timely and quite useful
- the assessment provided some help in generalising the knowledge, learning new things and better understanding.

The second questionnaire was only answered by two students. One student provided limited information, but confirmed they felt engaged during the assessment. The second student noted that overall, they lacked clarity on the expectations for the theory element of the module assessment.

## **Summary & Reflection**

Based on this intervention, a number of recommendations can be made:

1. Incorporation of several defence sessions throughout the course may be useful, and facilitate the provision of earlier, more structured feedback to students.

2. As students have poor understanding of the concept of 'theory questions', sample theory questions can be added to the lab manuals and discussed in class.

The accomplished intervention aimed only to familiarise students with the oral assessment approach. The oral discussion should be expanded to occur every 3rd week throughout the semester to provide earlier, more effective feedback and engage students with feedback.

## **Resources & References**

Bull, C., & Kharrufa, A. (2023). Generative AI Assistants in Software Development Education: A vision for integrating Generative AI into educational practice, not instinctively defending against it. *IEEE Software*.

McBain, Bonnie, et al. "Student experience of oral communication assessment tasks online from a multidisciplinary trial." *Education+ Training* 58.2 (2016): 134-149.

TESTA\_tools\_AEQ.pdf (strath.ac.uk) – a tool developed by Strathclyde University.

Handley, K., Price, M. and Millar, J., 2008. Engaging students with assessment feedback. Final Report for FDTL5 Project 144, 3.

# From Reflection to Action: Enhancing Assessment & Feedback, Academic Integrity, and Professional Identity in the BIS Programme

DENISE MCSWEENEY, DR. FRED CREEDON, DR. ANNA DYNAN, JOANNE COLE  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING & INFORMATION SYSTEMS

## **Project Aims**

This project aimed to enhance the student experience in the BIS programme by reimagining assessment and feedback through three core pillars: academic integrity, assessment and feedback and professional identity. Through staff-student workshops, we gathered insights and co-created practical resources to support understanding and implementation of best practices. The goal was to foster a culture of ethical learning, consistent feedback and stronger alignment between assessments and future professional roles.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

The intervention focused on developing a suite of resources to support students and staff in embedding the three core pillars of the RAFT initiative - academic integrity, assessment and feedback, and professional identity - into the everyday learning and teaching experience within the BIS programme.

Following initial workshops with both staff and students, we identified key gaps in understanding and practice across the three pillars. This feedback informed the design of targeted, practical resources intended to address specific challenges. These included:

- A Student Assessment Understanding Checklist, helping students plan, complete and reflect on assessments with reference to academic integrity, time management and professional skill development.

- A Programming Assignment Checklist, which includes guidance on file structure, code quality, software access and appropriate use of AI tools.
- An AI Use and External Assistance Policy, providing clarity on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use of AI and collaboration in programming assignments.
- A Reflection Handbook for Staff, offering reflective questions aligned to the three pillars to guide assessment design and feedback practices that support professional identity formation.

The implementation approach was collaborative and iterative. Staff were involved through workshops and resource review cycles, while student feedback was embedded through piloting the materials in modules and gathering reactions. Resources were distributed through MS Teams, introduced during class time and referenced in assignment briefs. The consistency of messaging across modules was a key focus, aiming to build shared understanding across the programme.

The use of reflection, clarity of expectations and alignment with professional contexts were central to the design of each resource. Together, these interventions created a foundation for a more transparent, values-driven assessment culture within BIS, equipping students with not only the academic skills but also the ethical and professional mindset required for future careers.

## Evaluation & Impact

The student-facing resources were piloted across two core modules in the BIS programme: the **Year 1 Information Systems for Business project** (120 students) and the **Year 2 Financial Technology elective module** (60 students). In both modules, students engaged with the Assessment Understanding Checklist as part of their assessment preparation and submission process.

Feedback gathered through informal reflections and in-class discussions highlighted that what students found most impactful was the clarity the checklists provided in linking their coursework to future learning and career development. Many students

reported, for the first time, recognising how skills such as problem-solving and communication, practiced during the project were transferable to both upcoming modules and potential workplace roles. This indicates early evidence of success in supporting professional identity formation.

On the staff side, the **RAFT Reflection Handbook** was introduced at a departmental meeting attended by 30 academic staff. Each participant received a printed copy of the guide. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many staff members commenting on its practicality, relevance and the usefulness of the reflective questions in stimulating ideas for redesigning assessments. Several lecturers expressed intentions to adapt aspects of the handbook into their upcoming module planning.

Overall, the intervention demonstrated tangible impact in creating shared language and tools to support assessment literacy, integrity and professional identity development. The widespread engagement across both student and staff groups, coupled with the relevance of the resources to day-to-day practice, suggests strong potential for continued adoption and sustained culture change across the BIS programme.

## **Summary & Reflection**

This project aimed to enhance academic integrity, assessment and feedback practices and professional identity within the BIS programme through the co-creation of practical resources for students and staff. Piloted across two modules and introduced to 30 staff members, the tools were well received. Students particularly valued how the resources helped them connect their coursework to future modules and careers. Staff responded positively to the reflective handbook, noting its usefulness for assessment redesign. The programming assignment checklist was also welcomed by programming staff who engaged well in the iterative design of the resource. The project highlights the value of collaborative, values-driven approaches to assessment and the importance of fostering shared understanding to support both academic development and professional identity formation.

## **Resources & References**

Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (2006). Aligning assessment with long-term learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*.

CAST. (2024). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines v3.0. The UDL Guidelines. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>

Damián, J. (2015) Professional identity, social recognition and entering the workforce of the university student with hybrid education

# The Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Co-created Rubric for Presentation Assessments across Sport and Exercise Modules

DR. SHANNON BURKE  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, LEISURE, AND CHILDHOOD STUDIES

## Project Aims

The aim of this project was to develop, implement, and evaluate a co-created presentation assessment rubric for use in sport and exercise-related modules.

Specifically, the project sought to:

1. Co-create a standardised set of performance criteria for presentation assessments.
2. Evaluate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the co-created rubric in supporting their assessment preparation.

## Intervention & Implementation

*Participants:* The sample consisted of all students (n = 132) enrolled in the first-year module 'Principles of Sport Psychology' in MTU Cork, which is delivered to students studying on the BSc Coaching Science & Sports Pedagogy; BBus Sport & Exercise Management; and BBus Recreation & Leisure Management. These students had no prior experience in the co-creation of assessment rubrics.

*Procedure:*

Phase 1: During class time, students were first introduced to the presentation assessment brief, which required students to choose a psychological construct covered in the lecture series (e.g., anxiety, self-confidence) and present an analysis of the construct in a sporting context of their choice, incorporating both research and theory.

Phase 2: A series of class-based activities were conducted to explore students' perceptions of the key criteria to be assessed in the presentation. Students first worked in small groups to generate a broad list of relevant performance criteria (e.g., grammar; structure; verbal presentation). Following, students were given a rubric template (Appendix A) and within their groups, identified more specific criteria to be assessed. These proposed criteria were subsequently reviewed, discussed and refined through a whole-class consensus-building activity. This participatory process was adopted to promote student clarity on key performance criteria, whilst also supporting student ownership (Panadero & Romero, 2014; Kilgour et al., 2020).

Phase 3: In the final phase, students used the co-created rubric to complete a peer assessment of presentations from previous cohorts. This activity was included to encourage critical engagement with the assessment criteria. Moreover, previous research has suggested that such activities have been linked with improved assessment outcomes and enhanced understanding of performance criteria (Panadero & Jonsson, 2023).

## **Evaluation & Impact**

A total of 132 students participated in the intervention and the co-creation of the rubric. 44 students participated in the evaluation process.

An adapted version of the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003) was used to evaluate the development and implementation of the co-created rubric. Additionally, open-ended questions were included to assess students' perceptions of the co-created rubric. Table 1 presents survey data. Highlights include:

- 95.5% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the rubric should be used in future iterations of the module.
- 90.9% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the rubric helped them focus on key performance criteria in preparation for their assessment.
- 95.5% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the criteria were clear and easy to understand.

- 86.4% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the rubric assisted their assessment planning and preparation.

AEQ Subscale	Score [1-5]
Clear Goals & Expectations	3.98
Quality of Criteria & Feedback	4.16
Student Engagement & Ownership	4.36
Student Use of Rubric	3.98

Table 1: Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ) Results

Reflections from students indicated that the co-created rubric provided clear expectations in relation to the performance criteria being assessed. For example, student 2 revealed:

‘The rubric clearly outlined what was expected from the presentation. It outlined how top marks were to be achieved’.

Similarly, student 32 stated:

‘I think that the rubric helped to give my group and I a deeper understanding as to what was to be expected as part of our presentation. It highlighted areas we should focus on and it led us in the direction to be able to achieve full marks from our presentation if we used it correctly’.

Additionally, students perceived the assessment process as fair, as a result of their active involvement in the rubric creation, student 17 stated:

‘It was very balanced and fair, and the students had input on it’.

## Summary & Reflection

The co-creation of a presentation rubric provided staff with a set of standardised performance criteria and grading bands, whilst also enabling the provision of specific

and relevant feedback in an efficient manner (Cockett & Jackson, 2018). Furthermore, the process of co-creation enabled students to gain clarity on the key performance criteria being assessed, whilst also providing students with a sense of ownership and autonomy, both of which are critical in enhancing student engagement (Panadero & Romero, 2014; Kilgour et al., 2020). Future work may seek to explore students' perceptions of the processes involved in the co-creation process. For example, it may be interesting to explore how students experience the balance between support and autonomy, and the extent to which the co-creation process impacts their sense of ownership and engagement in assessment.

## **Resources & References**

- Cockett, A., & Jackson, C. (2018). The use of assessment rubrics to enhance feedback in higher education: An integrative literature review. *Nurse education today*, 69, 8-13.
- Gibbs, G. & Simpson, C. (2003). Measuring the response of students to assessment: The Assessment Experience Questionnaire. Paper presented at the 11th Improving Student Learning Symposium.
- Kilgour, P., Northcote, M., Williams, A., & Kilgour, A. (2020). A plan for the co-construction and collaborative use of rubrics for student learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(1), 140-153.
- Panadero, E., & Romero, M. (2014). To rubric or not to rubric? The effects of self-assessment on self-regulation, performance and self-efficacy. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 21(2), 133-148.
- Panadero, E., Jonsson, A., Pinedo, L., & Fernández-Castilla, B. (2023). Effects of rubrics on academic performance, self-regulated learning, and self-efficacy: A meta-analytic review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(4), 113.

# Co-Constructing an Open-Book In-Class Assessment with Part Time HRM Students

DAVID O HANLON & JOE MURPHY  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF ORGANISATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Project Aims

This project sought to

- enhance engagement with in-class assessments by involving learners in their creation.
- create an in-class assessment that would generate better feedback to prepare students for end of module assignment.
- explore ‘assessment for learning’ – how the assessment prompted student learning strategies

## Intervention & Implementation

Negative student feedback about timed, closed-book exams, coupled with the challenges of maintaining academic integrity (associated with AI), resulted in trialling different ways to facilitate an open-book assessment. Prompted by ideas from Self Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), in order to promote student engagement, we sought to give students the autonomy to choose case studies which they would focus on during the assessment. The open book nature was also chosen to better enable students to write informed justifications to their answers (which overlapped with the activities involved in the final assignment). It was hoped that this would improve feedback on the in-class assessments by making it more relevant to the end of module assignment. The questions that students were asked during the assessments required them to make very specific choices, and justify the selection of those choices with reference to their learning (an adaptation of the 4S application exercise design principle used in the Team Based Learning approach, Oftachuk and Sibley., 2023).

In the first module (Recruitment and Selection – weeks 1-6), students compared case examples crowdsourced from each other. The timed open-book assessment tasked students with comparing five of the examples, evaluating them across a range of criteria (e.g. validity, bias, applicant reactions, reliability). Students were asked to select the cases that they felt could be quality exemplars vis a vis these criteria, as well as ranking the case studies in terms of approach. Throughout they had to justify their decisions with reference to the literature on recruitment and selection.

Based on student feedback gathered after the assessment and during a class feedback session, the open-book assessment in the second module (Performance Management) reduced the number of cases to compare to two. This time the students uploaded case examples of how performance management was conducted in organisations that they were familiar with. However, this time they compared their own case study with a real-life case example shared by the lecturer. Again, this was a timed open-book assessment where students compared the cases and evaluated them across a range of relevant criteria (e.g. approach to goal setting, ability to monitor underperformance, approach to feedback).

## **Evaluation & Impact**

17 students completed these modules as part of the part-time BA in Human Resource Management. A focus group with 4 volunteers was facilitated after the completion of the in-class assessment in the second module. The facilitator had not been involved in the delivery of the HRM programme.

Findings from the focus group suggested:

-The second assessment was well regarded as it required students to apply their learning to real-life cases rather than simply recalling information.

-Some students valued the challenge of comparing their own real-life example with a quality exemplar (viewing it as an authentic practice), whereas others did not see the relevance of comparing and contrasting (or justifying with reference to the literature).

-Artificial Intelligence was used by several students throughout the preparation for the assessment, in multiple ways. In some instances, it was used in the form of a “coach” as they sought to understand core content. It was also used by students to “summarise” the real-life case and generate potential sample answers based on predicted questions.

## **Summary & Reflection**

The assessment enabled students to engage in a timed, invigilated assessment whilst having more autonomy, focusing on areas that they were interested in, or that were particularly relevant to their work lives.

The open-book nature enabled them to apply their learning but also required them to produce notes that were the result of extensive preparation, often with the assistance of AI. A further development could be to ask students to submit notes that they create (including those generated with the aid of AI) and for students to appraise their suitability.

The ability to predict questions does open up the opportunity for students to quickly generate potential answers using AI, so a balance needs to be found between preparing students suitably for the assessment and making it too challenging to prepare for. Running a mock assessment beforehand to increase familiarity, engaging with a “mock exam paper”, with a more engaged rubric co-construction process (reference) could be strategies to employ.

Finding impactful ways to reflect with students on the relevance of engaging with the literature when analysing cases, and the “real life” necessity of comparing and evaluating approaches, would further help promote this as a meaningful assessment.

Making the assessment open book, made for feedback that was more relevant to the next assignments in both modules.

## **Resources & References**

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, 101860.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>

Sibley, J., & Ostafichuk, P. (2014). *Getting Started With Team-Based Learning* | Larry K. Michaelsen, Jim Si. Routledge.

## Part 6: Exploring the Student Experience

This final section focuses on the learner journey, evaluating how assessment architectures shape student engagement and growth. In Hospitality Management, graduates highlight a strong preference for authentic, real-life scenarios over traditional exams, which are often perceived as stressful memory tests. Research into rubrics underscores their value in providing grading transparency and clarifying expected standards, though a notable gap exists between staff and student engagement levels. Finally, in Counselling, the assessment process serves as a catalyst for professional development, leading to statistically significant increases in personal insight. These studies underscore the necessity of student-centred design to foster meaningful learning.

# Motivating Students to Engage with Rubrics

UNA MOYNIHAN  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & LEISURE STUDIES

## Project Aims

To explore the beliefs and practices of staff and students on the use of assessment rubrics to ascertain scope for improved coherency. More specifically, student and staff insights on the following was explored:

1. Use of rubrics in assessment of learning.
2. Perceived value of rubrics to student learning.
3. Perceived value of rubrics to teaching and assessment.

## Study Implementation

Initially, quantitative surveys on the staff and student perceptions of the value of rubrics were developed; one survey targeted staff, while the other targeted students. The staff and student surveys mirrored each other, to facilitate comparison, with language tailored to each cohort. They were largely informed by Reddya and Andrade (2010), Bharuthram, (2015), Dawson (2015) and Mphahlele (2022). Topics explored in the survey included the use of rubrics, the value of rubrics, perceptions of rubrics (Mphahlele, 2022), rubrics as reflection tools (Bharuthram, 2015), self-assessment, co-creation and rubric descriptors (Dawson, 2015).

The surveys were piloted with staff and student volunteers to get feedback on completion time, user-friendliness and ease of comprehension. Some minor changes were made to the wording of some questions and the final surveys were generated on MS Forms. Data was collected from staff (n=38) and students (n=106) across the School of Health and Social Science in MTU Kerry.

## Findings

In relation to the use of rubrics in the design (staff) and submission (student) of assignments, 95% of staff report the use of rubrics most of the time, while just over 43% of students report regular use of rubrics. 50% of students reported that they are never required to use rubrics.

### *Use of Rubrics*

The top three uses of rubrics, as reported in Figure 1 are:

1. The study of rubrics by students before starting an assignment.
2. Going through the details of the rubric in class before it's use in assignments.
3. The use of rubrics for self-assessment.

The mean scores between staff and student responses were used to rank the order. A MannWhitney U test was performed on each of the items in the 'use of rubrics' section and there was significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between distribution of scores for staff and students.

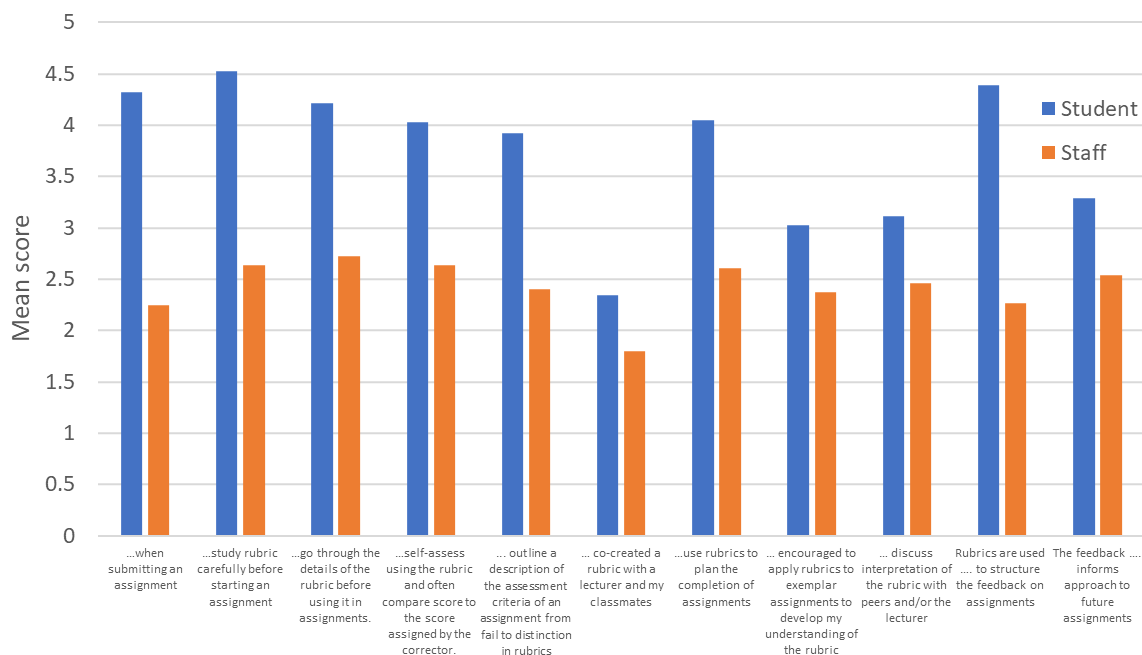
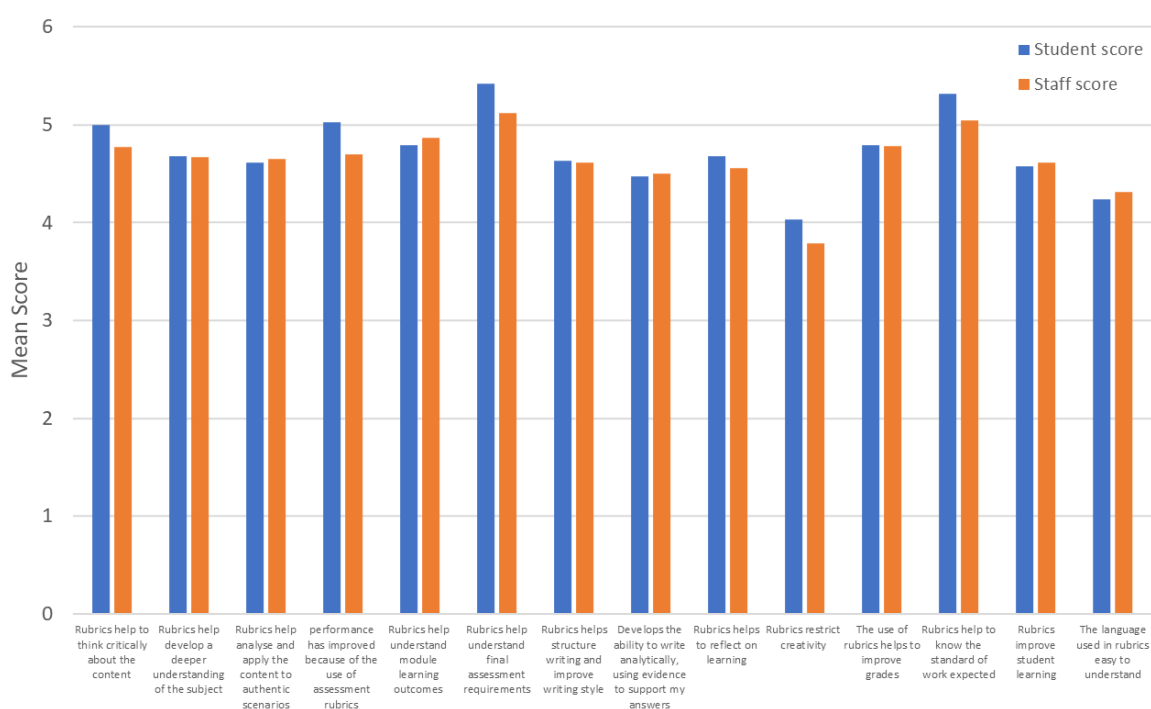


Figure 1. Staff & student use of rubrics.

### *Value of Rubrics to Student Learning*

The main value of rubrics to student learning, as determined by the average score of both staff and students (Figure 2) are, in rank order:

1. Understanding the assessment requirements.
2. Knowing the standard expected.
3. Promote critical thinking.



**Figure 2. Staff & student perceptions on value of rubrics to student learning.**

### *The Value of Rubrics to Teaching and Assessment*

The top three perceived value of rubrics to teaching and assessment (Figure 3) are:

1. Rubrics make grading more transparent.
2. Rubrics improve the consistency of grading across a group of students.
3. Rubrics improve the accuracy of grading.

(Note- mean scores between staff and student responses were used to rank order)

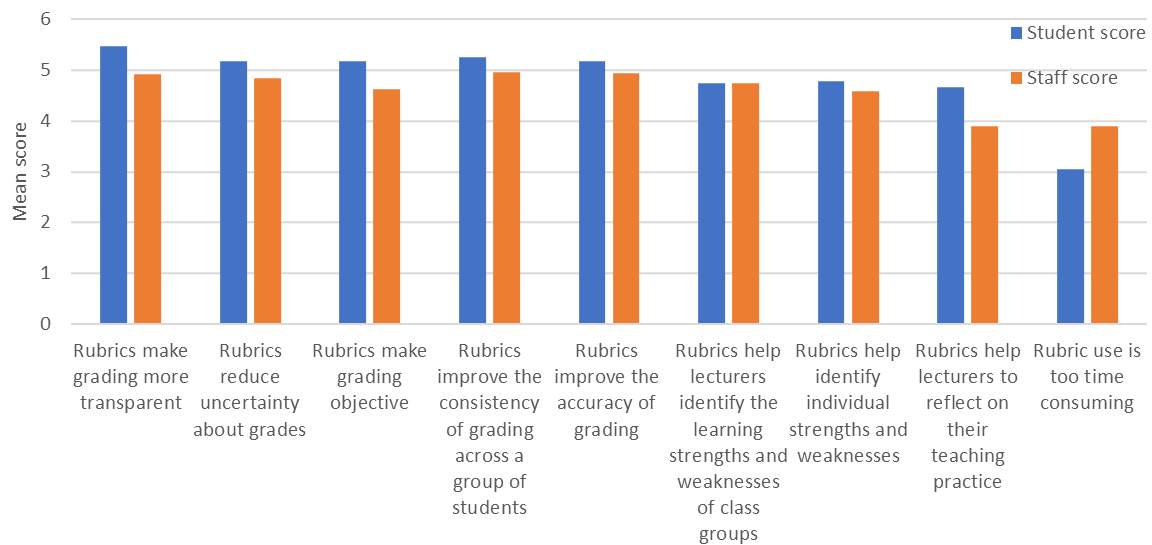


Figure 3. Staff & student perceptions on value of rubrics to teaching & assessment.

Analysis of the free comments that respondents contributed suggest that while there is quite a positive attitude to rubrics across both staff and student groups, there are concerns about the operations of rubrics across the groups. Students feel that some staff could be more supportive in preparing them to use rubrics, while some staff feel that certain students are not sufficiently motivated to engage with rubrics. There is a lack of training offered to both groups of stakeholders around the use of rubrics. While some strong views were offered about perceived limitations of rubrics in respect of expansive and independent thinking, there is scope for training to be offered to promote some level of congruence around the use of rubrics.

## Summary & Reflection

Some philosophical concerns about rubric use were raised. This suggests that there is a need to find a means of deploying rubrics and or other assessment tools to maximise the benefits of rubric use but prevent some of the perceived homogenisation of learning that was suggested. The perceived role of rubrics in enhancing the transparency and

accountability of the assessment process is an aspect worthy of further exploration. These are desirable aspects of any relationship and if rubrics can play a role in bringing this into the teaching/learning relationship, then this is worthy of further consideration. Looking at rubric design to emphasise these features is a piece of research and dissemination that could serve the University well.

## **Resources & References**

- Bharuthram, S 2015. Lecturers' perceptions: The value of assessment rubrics for informing teaching practice and curriculum review and development, *Africa Education Review*, 12:3, 415-428, DOI: 10.1080/18146627.2015.1110907
- Dawson, P 2015. Assessment rubrics: towards clearer and more replicable design, research and practice. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 42:3, 347-360, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2015.1111294
- Mphahlele, Letebele. 2022. Students' Perception of the Use of a Rubric and Peer Reviews in an Online Learning Environment. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 15: 503. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm15110503>
- Panadero, E. & Jonsson, A. (2020). A critical review of the arguments against the use of rubrics. *Educational Research Review* (online first). doi: 10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100329
- Reddy, YM and Andrade H 2010. A review of rubric use in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* Vol. 35, No. 4, July 2010, 435–448

# Student Experience of Assessment & Feedback in Hospitality Management

BRIGID WALSH, GRAINNE DALY, RUTH FARRELL  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

## Project Aims

This was an exploratory project the aim of which was to evaluate students experience of assessment and feedback in the final year of the Hospitality Management programme. The programme incorporates an innovative range of teaching and learning strategies including problem-based learning, hotel simulators, site visits and live case studies, but assessment was perhaps underexamined. Therefore, the team took this opportunity to explore the assessment and feedback experience.

## Study Implementation

The study design was influenced by Vattøy, Gamlem and Rogne (2021) who adopted the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (Gibbs and Simpson, 2003). This study concentrated on three key areas: Assessment, feedback and management of the workload. A series of in-depth interviews with an integrated questionnaire were conducted with former graduates of the year 4 programme. A total of 25 graduates were invited to participate and interviews were conducted with 16 of those, giving a response rate of 64%.

## Findings

During the in-depth interviews, participants were asked to rate different assessment instruments in relation to the instruments impact on learning.

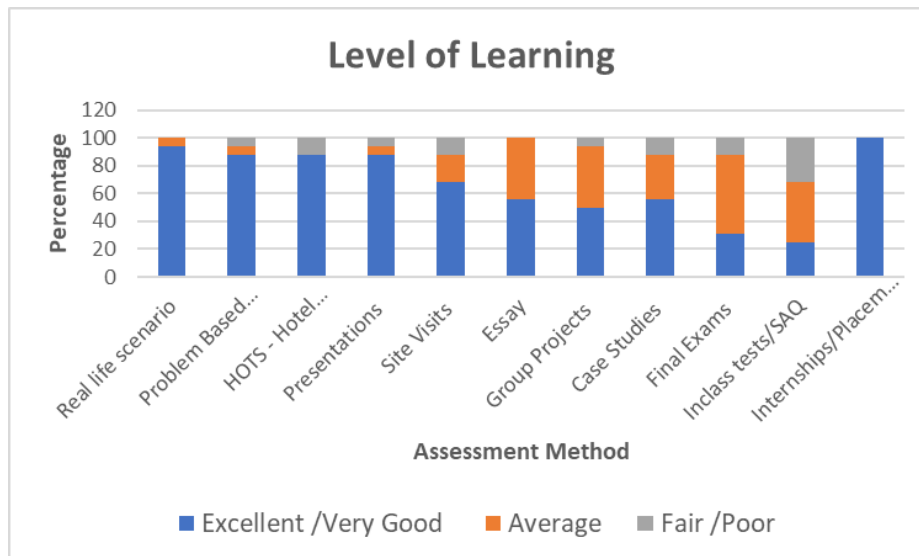


Figure 1 illustrates these participants rating of the different assessment instruments used.

With only 20% of participants selecting 'excellent/very good' for final exams and in-class tests, participants rating of the learning potential of these instruments is lukewarm at best. In contrast, approximately 60% rate essays and site visits while over 80% rate presentations, hotel simulations, problem-based learning and authentic or real-life scenarios as having learning potential.

Some of the issues that participants identified with exams was that they were all about memory/regurgitation and were really stressful. More authentic assessments were reported to be more engaging 'really helped you to get into the mindset – what would I do if I was in that situation' and 'group projects you could get other people's perspectives and it would often make you look at things differently'.

Participants reported largely positive experiences of feedback. While they expressed a preference for tutor derived feedback as it was deemed the most credible source, they were also open to feedback from other sources, notably peers. Participants reported that feedback from others enabled them to benchmark their own performance against peers, generated ideas for different approaches to the work and provided suggestions for improvements. Participants were pretty clear that 'after you got the grade the feedback was pretty ineffective' and 'once you got the grade it didn't matter'. Therefore,

feedback needed to be before the event, on drafts or related to ‘how you can improve for other projects and assignments’.

Participants also reported that managing the assessment workload, as opposed to the workload itself was a challenge.

## **Summary & Reflection**

Collecting and evaluating the student experience has prompted the following assessment re-design decisions:

- No modules would have final exams worth more than 60%
- The use of larger assessments worth 50% to encourage students to engage with the content throughout the semester with draft submissions scheduled and opportunities for formative feedback throughout.
- In the Hotel Simulation module, the assessment was changed to make it more authentic. For example, small reports were replaced with formal management meetings.
- Greater awareness of students challenges with time management has led to our use of draft submissions for larger assessment pieces to encourage earlier engagement and provide greater opportunities for feedback

## **Resources & References**

Gibbs, G., and Simpson, C. (2003) Measuring the response of students to assessment: The Assessment Experience Questionnaire, presented at 11th Improving Student Learning Symposium

Vattøy, K.D., Gamlem, S.M. and Rogne, W.M. (2021) Examining students’ feedback engagement and assessment experiences: a mixed study, *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(11), pp. 2325–2337. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1723523>.

# To What Extent Does Counselling Training Impact a Student's Levels of Self-Reflection & Insight

GRAHAM GILL-EMERSON  
MTU DEPARTMENT OF ORGANISATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## **Project Aims**

The aim of this study is to explore if counselling training impacts a student's levels of self-reflection and insight, and to what extent.

## **Intervention & Implementation**

Students of the 2023-2024 One Year Certificate in Counselling Skills program at MTU were recruited for this study. These students had no prior counselling training and thus offered an effective base line to measure self-reflection and insight from. Students were invited to participate via email, and provided with an informed consent form to opt-in.

A validated questionnaire derived from Grant & Franklin (2002) was utilised. The 20-statement questionnaire uses a 6-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree and strongly agree). Each point on the Likert scale is scored from 1 – 6, with six statements in which the scoring is reversed. The instrument breaks scoring into three subsets, measuring:

1. Engagement in self-reflection
2. Need for self-reflection
3. Gaining personal insight.

Participants completed the questionnaire via MS Forms. Data was gathered at end of week 1 of semester 1 (baseline data) and after semester 1 completion. Data was analysed as a means of generating descriptive statistics on the sample's shifts in self-

reflection as they progressed through semester 1 of the one-year certificate program in MTU.

## **Evaluation & Impact**

Baseline and end-of-semester data was gathered from 10 participants.

- ‘Engagement in self-reflection’ increased from a mean score of 24.4 to 28 over the course of the semester (range increased from 18-31 at baseline to 25-32 at semester end). This fell narrowly short of being statistically significant ( $p=.058$ ).
- The ‘gaining personal insight’ section of the instrument recorded greatest increases with a mean score at baseline of 29.9, rising to 34.6 four months later. End-of-semester scores had a narrower range (28-39) compared to baseline scores (21-38). This was a statistically significant change ( $p=.011$ ).
- There was little change in the ‘need for self-reflection’ score (baseline score range: 24-36, end-of-semester score range: 23-36). This criteria may be naturally resistant to change as all participants had engaged in personal therapy and therefore may have already opted in to the value of self-reflection, thus reducing resistance. This was not statistically significant ( $p=.601$ ).

## **Summary & Reflection**

Overall, though the sample size was small, these are very promising results, given the short amount of time that had passed between each stage of data collection.

Further research could examine if the self-reflection and insight scores correlate with end of year marks and progression through the greater 4 year counselling qualification program at MTU.

## **Resources & References**

Grant, A. M., Franklin, J., & Langford, P. (2002). The self-reflection and insight scale: A new measure of private self-consciousness. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 30(8), 821-835.

Heinonen, E., & Nissen-Lie, H. A. (2020). The professional and personal characteristics of effective psychotherapists: A systematic review. *Psychotherapy Research*, 30(4), 417-432.