Correction Notice

Editor's Comment:

After publication, the authors brought to our attention several minor errors that required factual correction:

In the version of the article originally published, the teaching unit is incorrectly identified as MCom. This has been corrected in the Challenge and Response sections. The MCom student cohort numbers have consequently also been deleted in the corrected version.

In the Response section, these words have been inserted in the first sentence of the second paragraph: 'collaborating with the unit of study coordinator to'.

At the end of the second paragraph, this sentence has been inserted: 'BCD also evaluated them via a student survey'.

For each of the example Responses provided, the respondents to the student surveys, who were referred to as 'students', have been redesignated 'survey respondents'.

The Editorial Board of JLDHE would like to extend its sincere apologies for any inconvenience these corrections may have caused.

A holistic approach to authentic and engaging assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic: an Australian case study

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Keywords: assessment; connected learning at scale; Business Co-Design; online, active, and peer learning pedagogy; Covid-19.

The challenge

During the height of the pandemic, we had to transition to online learning rapidly. This required educators to move all content, activities, and assessment tasks very quickly onto Canvas, our Universities Learning Management System (LMS). One of the most significant issues that we experienced was fostering engagement with the students and finding suitable eTools to promote engagement and support authentic assessment of this unit.

This research uses one case study based on a Business School unit, that was run in semester one, 2021, which the Business Co-Design (BCD) team collaborated with.

For the unit we had to develop assessments that would foster student engagement throughout the semester.

Once we had developed the assessment the next hurdle was to trial several eTools, such as Menti, Jamboard, and Padlet, to find out which were suitable for our activities. The eTools needed to not dictate the pedagogy; the pedagogical approach directly influences learning, and we did not want to compromise the pedagogy of online, active, and peer learning, or the assessment of this unit (Clark, 2001; Cook, 2020; Peterson, 2020). Therefore, by developing the assessment first and then identifying the eTools that would

best support it, we ensured that the development of the assessment was not driven byeTools.

The response

Each of the connected learning at scale (CLaS) units that we are working on is allocated asmall team comprising of one learning designer (LD), an educational developer (ED), and Media staff. In addition, we have a research assistant (RA) that conducts research and evaluation (R&E), as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. BCD Design and Development Coordination.
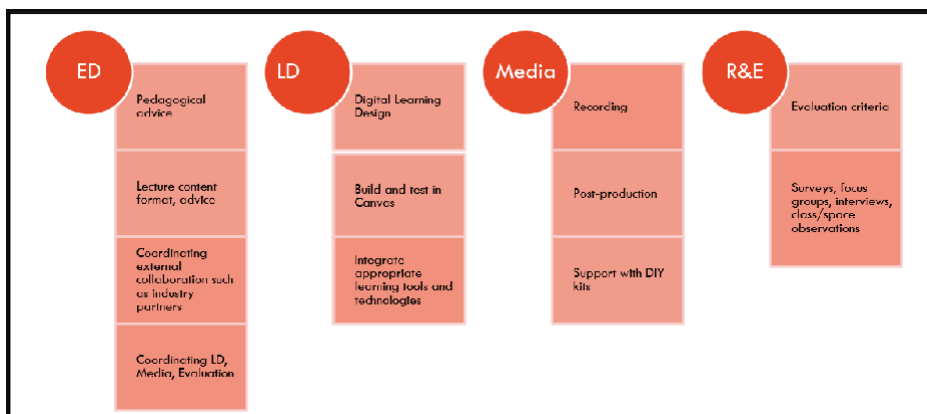
Source: Sabina Cerimagic, 2021

Each team member is tasked with collaborating with the unit of study coordinator to design, develop, and implement changes to units to meet the challenges of the pandemic and the switch to online and blended learning and teaching. With the help of this team approach in co-designing thisunit we developed several authentic assessments to encourage student engagement and learning. BCD also evaluated them via a student survey.

- Icebreaker activities linked to the weekly topic were carried out at the beginning ofeach workshop. We used Mentimeter for the icebreaker activities and most of the survey respondents (73.5%) agreed that participating in these activities motivated them to engage in the workshops.

- Reflective ePortfolio – video log ('Vlog'). There is much content to cover in this unit, and a vlog was one way to ask the students to reflect on each of the perspectives/topics they have covered. Students were instructed to upload their Vlog to Canvas studio, with the bulk of survey respondents (89%) saying they enjoyed the 'Vlog'.

- Workshop Presentation Debates were carried out in groups/teams of five. Studentshad to split into two sides in their group – a 'For' and an 'Against' side. Students then worked together (as a team) to present both sides of an argument for their designated debate topic (using communication and presentation skills) using the lecture materials and resources. The majority (78%) of the survey respondents indicated that the workshop presentations benefited their learning.

Some workshops were run face-to-face, and for these, the students did the debates in front of the class but the majority of the workshops were held online using Zoom (as mostof our students are based overseas).

We also utilised Jamboard where possible – Jamboard is an easy-to-use eTool to get thewhole class engaged. One downside to Jamboard is that it can only support up to 50 students at one time. Thus, when our class had more than 50 students, we had to switchover to Padlet (another eTool). Most of our students (67%) indicated that Canvas/Padlet/Jamboard helped support their assessment requirements.

It was crucial to ensure that assessments are authentic, as student perceptions of authenticity are vital and contribute significantly to the completion of learning outcomes (Ajjawi et al., 2020). Students make judgments about the assessment tasks they are given,including judgements on the authenticity of assessments. The individualistic nature of assessment tasks, such as report writing and reflective writing, does not allow students to exhibit the communication, problem-solving, and collaboration skills they learned (Mantai and Huber, 2021). Qualitative analysis conducted by Ajjawi et al. (2020) found that students also perceived written assessments as incapable of capturing learnt professional skills adequately.

We therefore sought to create authentic assessments which support online, active, and peer learning and by doing so, we increased student engagement and provided learners

with a platform to demonstrate the skills they learnt. In addition, academic dishonesty issues (which are often linked to written assessments) were minimized as it is impossible to cheat on a Vlog which requires students to film themselves delivering a reflective piece. As a result, we had zero academic dishonesty issues in semester one, 2021.

Recommendations

Our goal was to foster student engagement in a predominantly online delivery model, which still encouraged active and peer learning. In addition, we sought to create a relevant, innovative and authentic assessment where learning is applied and tested through authentic assessment modes and supported by opportunities to receive and sharefeedback from academics and their peers.

We achieved this goal by developing innovative assessments, such as icebreaker activities, in-class debates, and Vlogs. Our aim was to engage students within both large groups and in small tutorial classes, using a process of educational design involving socially constructed alignment, staff development, supported student-led learning, and innovative large-scale teaching pedagogies (Bryant, 2019; Cerimagic and Khanna, 2020).

Recommendations for others trying to implement similar practices:

1. Develop the assessments first: To ensure that pedagogy takes primacy, the toolsshould serve to allow you to support learning and develop resources that remain authentic to your agreed approach.
2. Explore and pilot several eTools. Select a few eTools that will meet your needs andrequirements and ensure that the eTools are simple to use and that they are inexpensive and/or accessible.
3. Additionally, you should create detailed assessment instructions (either as a Worddoc or on your LMS) to manage student queries around assessments. Then, yourtutors can refer students to this whenever there are questions.

Never before has it been so crucial that online teaching and assessment is engaging, educational, and innovative. This can be achieved by ensuring that the pedagogy and theeTools are chosen to complement and support each other. In this short paper we have outlined an example of how this can be achieved. Future studies on assessment design and transformation may incorporate this case study and perhaps merge with other similarcases in the same context to improve the design of authentic assessments to foster and encourage increased student engagement.

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