

Reviewing assessment at the subject level

Guidelines for JCU Subject Coordinators

Step 1: Review alignment between Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and assessment and respective weighting.

Complete this simple table to examine alignment between your SLOs and assessment tasks:

Assessment Tasks	Aligned SLOs	Weighting
1.	#	
2.	#	
3.	#	
4.	#	

Identify your assessment task types from the [JCU Assessment Type List](#), which provides a comprehensive list of assessment types, according to genres.

How many assessment tasks do you have? The [JCU Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy](#) Item 5.4.1 states that in most cases, there will be “a maximum of 4 assessment items” for a 3-credit point subject.

Are your assessment types appropriate in light of the knowledge and skills targeted in your SLOs? Refer to this resource that aligns assessment tasks with [Bloom and colleagues’ taxonomy](#). Are higher order tasks weighted accordingly (i.e. where students have an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills in purposeful, authentic contexts)?

Advice from Dr Duncan Nulty, Visiting Assessment Scholar to JCU, 2013:

Be sure that the marks awarded through the assessment match the relative importance of the learning outcomes. Constructivism is the idea that learning outcomes are developed in a progressive sequence. Start simple and build from there to more complex. What is learned later is (usually) more valuable than what is learned early – so weight your assessment accordingly. Don’t award marks for unimportant learning outcomes. Do assess difficult and important learning outcomes.

Note: There is no longer a requirement in JCU policy for 50% invigilated assessment. The rationale for lifting the invigilated requirement was to encourage staff to consider a diverse range of assessment types – tasks that may be more appropriately aligned with higher order learning outcomes and closer to real world applications within the profession or discipline. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy Item 4.5 states, “Time-constrained assessments (e.g. exams and oral presentations) must be appropriate to the stated outcomes of the subject.”

Step 2: Review assessment tasks for authenticity.

Review your most heavily weighted task for authenticity.

The assessment task:	✓
• Is perceived by students as being authentic	Yes
• is similar to the real work done in professional contexts, highlighting situational and contextual knowledge, including the acquisition of relevant professional attitudes and competencies	Yes
• Ensures that students have opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills	Yes
• Requires production of knowledge rather than reproduction	Yes
• Involves complex, ill structured challenges that require judgement, multiple steps, and a full array of tasks	Yes
• Is seamlessly integrated with core learning activities	Yes

• <i>Is performance-based</i>	Yes
• <i>Is motivating, enjoyable, sustains interest and is challenging but achievable</i>	Yes
• <i>Emphasises assessment for learning purposes rather than just for grading, and incorporates social, cognitive and reflective processes of learning</i>	Yes
• <i>Incorporates self, peer and/or client assessment</i>	Yes
• <i>Stimulates a wide range of active responses</i>	Yes
• <i>Requires significant student time and effort in collaboration with others</i>	Yes

Sources: Deakin University (n.d.); Herrington & Herrington (2006)

Also see Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott's (2016) website for [Powerful Assessment Exemplars](#).

Step 3: Review submission and feedback milestones

Is assessment distributed across the study period (Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy Item 5.4.2) and, importantly, is there opportunity for formative feedback early in the study period (Item 8.7.1.)?

Note: The difference between formative and summative assessment “hinges on purpose” (Veness, 2013, p. 29).

Formative assessment: its purpose is to gather feedback that can be used by teaching staff and students to guide improvements in the ongoing teaching and learning context.

Summative assessment: its purpose is to measure the level of students' success or proficiency that has been achieved at the end of an instructional unit, by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.

	Feedback	Marks towards final grade
Formative <i>Assessment for learning</i>	<i>Always provided (by definition)</i>	<i>Sometimes awarded</i>
Summative <i>Assessment of learning</i>	<i>Sometimes provided</i>	<i>Always awarded (by definition)</i>

If you return to the table outlining the characteristics of authentic assessment, you will see that it often involves “multiple steps and a full array of tasks”. Is there opportunity for integrated assessment task design in your subject – that is, where a rich culminating task is broken up into various components and, hence, where feedback is consequential for the student? Here is an example of integrated task design for a professional practice subject in education, where students had the benefit of multiple sources of formative feedback:

Assessment Task 1: Design and evaluate a hypothetical lesson plan for practicum class.		
Study period	Assessment tasks	Who assesses?
Week 4 [Formative]	<i>Submit intended learning outcomes for lesson</i>	<i>Lecturer feedback</i>
Week 5 [Formative]	<i>Submit draft lesson plan online</i>	<i>Peer feedback</i>
Week 6 [Formative]	<i>Submit critique of peer's lesson online, utilising structured template</i>	
Week 7 [Formative]	<i>Submit response to peer's feedback online</i>	<i>Self-assessment</i>
Week 9 [Summative]	Submit Assessment Task 1: Respond to two high level questions, with respect to lesson plan, drawing upon appendices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How is the lesson constructively aligned?</i> • <i>How does the lesson accommodate learner diversity?</i> Appendix A: Refined lesson plan Appendix B: Authentic learner data	<i>Lecturer feedback</i>
Assessment Task 2: Practicum portfolio including evidence based reflections on effectiveness of four implemented lessons.		

If assessment tasks are not integrated, are there opportunities nonetheless for consequential feedback – that is, students can apply feedback from one task to another task within your subject to enhance their performance?

You may find it helpful to map your assessment and feedback milestones (as well as learning and teaching landscape), utilising the JCU Subject Sequence Template, under [Guides and Planning Tools](#).

Checklist: My assessment is:

<i>Valid, aligning with the subject learning outcomes and assessing what it purports to assess?</i>	Yes
<i>Authentic, providing opportunities for students to apply targeted knowledge and skills in purposeful and novel contexts?</i>	Yes
<i>Distributed across the study period with opportunities for formative feedback</i>	Yes

References

Bloom, B., Engelhart, M. Furst, E., Hill, W. & Krathwohl, D. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: David McKay.

Deakin University. (n.d.). *Authentic assessment*. Retrieved from http://www.deakin.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/268511/AUTHENTIC-ASSESSMENT.pdf

Herrington, J., & Herrington, A. (2006). Authentic conditions for authentic assessment: Aligning task and assessment. In A. Bunker & I. Vardi (Eds.), Proceedings of the 2006 Annual International Conference of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Inc (HERDSA). *Critical Visions: Thinking, Learning and Researching in Higher Education: Research and Development in Higher Education*, 29, 141-151.

Veness, D. (2013). Plotting a course: Curriculum design for university teachers. Retrieved from http://cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/Veness_Plotting%20a%20course_Feb2013_3.pdf