Take Home Exams (THE)

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Take home exams (THE) mean students do the exam tasks outside the classroom with exam question(s) being provided in advance. Students are required to attempt question(s) individually and without help from others. The exam is returned within a specified period of time (usually within 24 hours). Open book exams usually refer to an in-class, time-limited exam in which students are permitted to use specified notes/texts.

In the case of online open book exams, the examiner must assume that students have access to specified materials plus other sources, such as the internet, class notes and other texts. In this section, we focus on some good practices of facilitating THE with existing (and free) online tools. The key to a successful THE is the preparation steps prior to the exam.

Please also refer to guidelines on administering THE in LearnJCU.

Step 1: Review the content verbs of your Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

As a start, teachers should revisit the content verbs of the SLOs associated with your THE, which helps you decide the workload of THE. Estimating the preparation time that students need to spend on your THE ensures the assessment workload is manageable. For example, a 3-credit subject is equivalent to roughly 130 hours of work for students according to JCU Assessment Policy 4.3. If you are replacing an unseen invigilated exam with a THE, consider the workload implication of your THE when setting up availability. It is a good idea to consult with your tutors and colleagues to decide if this workload is too much for students.

Step 2: Design THE questions

Your THE questions need to align with SLOs. A way to ensure this alignment is through Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl, Anderson, & Bloom, 2001) on the use of content verbs. This learning objective generator is a useful tool for teachers to create meaningful THE questions that match the metacognitive load of SLOs.

lower order thinking skills → higher order thinking skills

remember	understand	apply	analyze	evaluate	create
recognizing • identifying recalling • retrieving	interpreting • clarifying • paraphrasing • representing • translating exemplifying • illustrating • instantiating classifying • categorizing • subsuming summarizing • abstracting • generalizing inferring • concluding • extrapolating • interpolating • predicting comparing • contrasting • mapping • matching explaining • constructing models	executing • carrying out implementing • using	differentiating • discriminating • distinguishing • focusing • selecting organizing • finding coherence • integrating • outlining • parsing • structuring attributing • deconstructing	checking • coordinating • detecting • monitoring • testing critiquing • judging	generating • hypothesizing planning • designing producing • constructing

Figure 1: A table of lower to higher order thinking skills

Step 3: Place your THE

Teacher are encouraged to redesign assessment to include diagnostic, formative, integrative and summative assessment types as proposed by Crisp (2012). His framework is useful for thinking about what type of assessment that your THE is and the pedagogical implication behind it.

Diagnostic assessment tasks

Set up at early stage of the subject to understand students' current learning. The feedback from students' performance is used to inform the pace of teaching.

Formative assessment tasks

Set up in the middle of the subject timeline to understand students' 'current' learning and provide feedback, whether from teachers or peers, to improve learning status. Formative assessment tasks should orient students' satisfactory completion of summative assessment.

Summative assessment

Set up at the end of subject to understand students' overall learning status. The feedback from students' performance should inform 'future teaching'.

Integrative assessment tasks

This is a new notion proposed by Crisp (2012). The exams are best implemented within formative exams with constructive feedback on 'how', rather than 'where' to improve learning. The key of integrative assessment is to provide feedback for students to influence their 'approaches' for future continuous learning in the discipline.

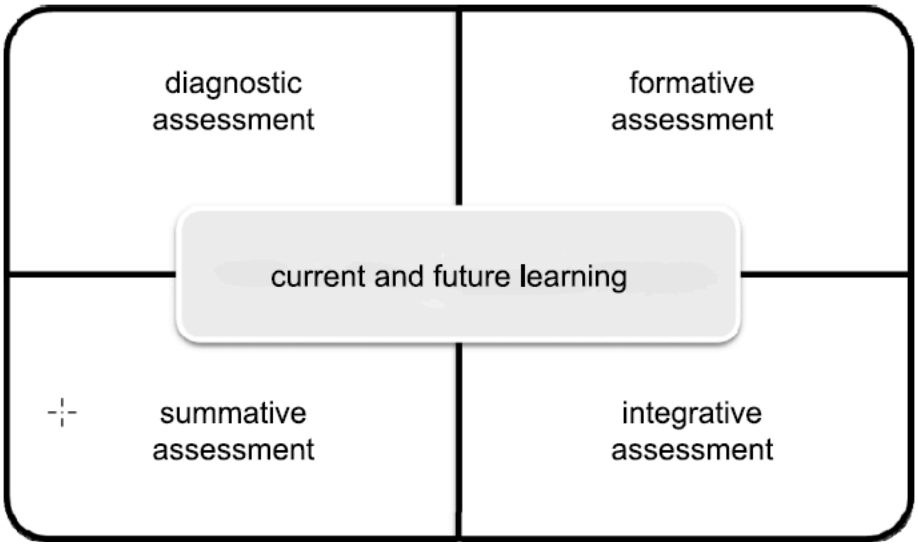


Figure 2: Crisp's (2012: p.39) descriptors for the four types of assessment tasks

Step 4: Design and explain the marking rubric

Marking rubrics are essential to ensure the reliability of assessment, meaning to what extent that one can make inference out of the result of exam about the examinee's proficiency within the area of exam (Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011; Shaw & Crisp, 2011). To write up a meaningful marking rubric containing differentiated descriptions on each criterion and standard could be difficult. Teachers could use templates from existing online resources, such as Rubistar and modify the rubrics to match the general requirement of any industry accreditation (the *industry's* minimum standards, not *your* standards).

One of the biggest challenges of writing up marking rubrics is the line drawn between some qualities. For example, how to differentiate between fair (Credit) and good (Distinction) essay quality. To help students understand, teachers should use examples to explain the expected thinking framework. The usefulness of Biggs' SOLO taxonomy (structure of the observed learning outcome) (Biggs, 1982) in this instance is showed below (Figure 3):

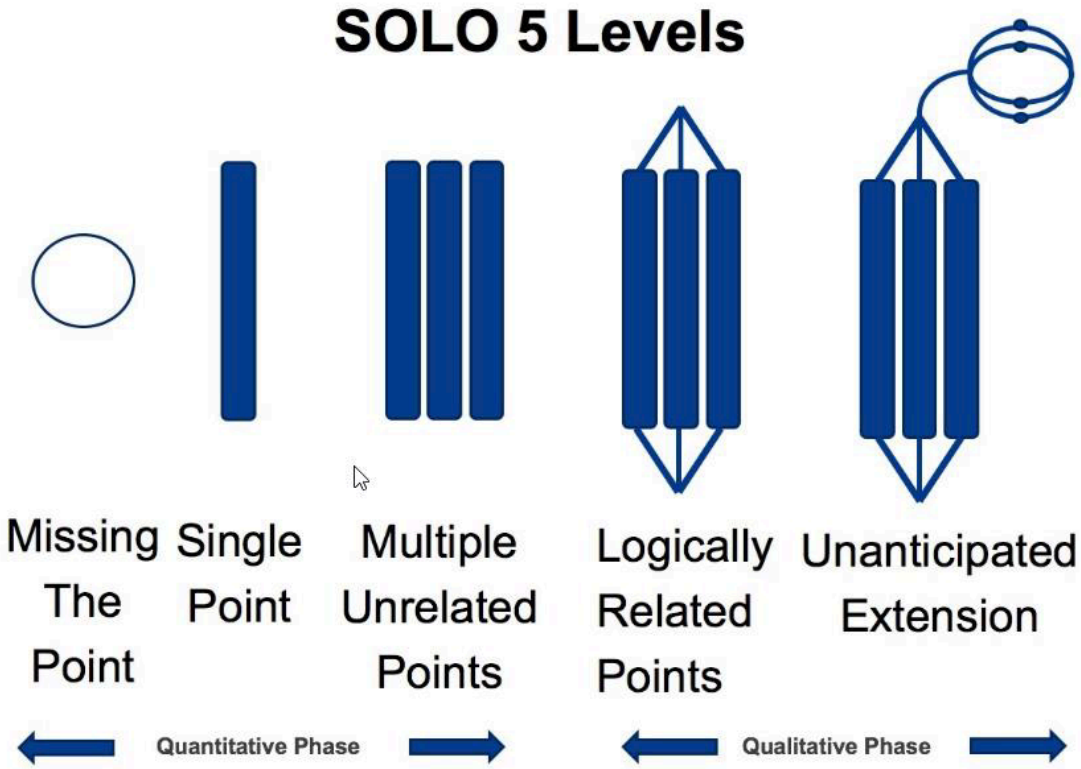


Figure 3: SOLO 5 Levels. Retrieved from UNSW Teaching Gateway

Here is an example to explain a basic facilitation of rubric writing with online tool and SOLO:

Teacher J categorises essay quality into five classes (HD, D, C, P and F) in his marking rubric. In the description of each criterion, SOLO is adopted for explaining the line between classes. The essay topic is "Analysing economic impacts of Corvid-19 on Australian small businesses". Teacher J goes to Rubistar and modifies the rubric shown below.

	HD (86-100%)	D (76-85%)	C (65-75%)	P (50-64%)	F (0-49%)
Organization (20%)	Well organized document that is easy to follow	Mostly organized there are a few areas where it was difficult to follow the logic	Somewhat organized	Very little structure or organization	Could not follow logic
Academic Language (20%)	Nearly no grammar or spelling errors	1-5 grammar or spelling errors	6-10 grammar or spelling errors	11-15 grammar or spelling errors	More than 16 grammar or spelling errors
Argument (60%)	Great argument. Statements and extended idea are supported with references	Great argument but not always supported with data. One extended idea without supporting references	Acceptable contents, but the ideas are somehow unrelated	Overall content is related to the topic, but ideas are insufficient and unrelated.	Poor content, was not well thought through and meets very little of the assignment requirements

Besides spending time explaining the rationales behind the design of this rubric with his students as part of including students' voices in assessment (Wolsey, 2008), Teacher J explains the differences between a C and D in terms of Argument based on SOLO (Biggs, 1982):

Credit (C) quality example

The outbreak of Covid-19 forces many small businesses to temporarily or permanently close down (source A). Small businesses in regional areas are affected more than those in big cities. Morrison government provides some financial support schemes (source B) for small businesses; however, these businesses are still struggling with the downturn.

Comment

There are three ideas stated here:

Two ideas are supported by sources, and one idea is left without data support. The overall content is related to the essay topic, so it is acceptable. However, these three ideas are neither logically related nor analytically stated.

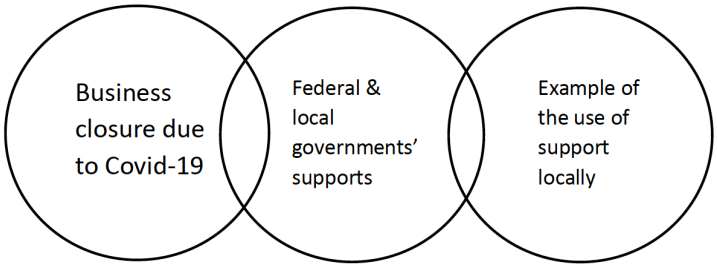
Distinguish (D) quality example

Distinguish

The outbreak of Covid-19 forces many small businesses to temporarily or permanently close down (source A). Small businesses in regional areas are affected more than those in big cities. To protect and facilitate quick recovery from this downturn, both Federal and Local governments provide some financial support schemes (source B, C) for small businesses. For example, Federal government's scheme A (source D) and Queensland government's economic package for small businesses (source E). With these financial supports, local businesses are also being innovative for new and sustainable mode of operation. Not only are they minimising economic downturn, but they are expanding new opportunities. For example, a local café in Townsville is experimenting take-away menu with collaboration with existing food delivery services (source F).

Comment

In this case, the logic is shown below:



There are several related ideas being connected and analytically stated with multiple references to support the logic of problem-solution.

References

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