
CASE STUDY 13

Podcasts can Assess Module Learning Outcomes as Effectively as Essays

Discipline: Business
Student Numbers: 57



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Introduction and Context:

The module discussed in this case study International Entrepreneurship with 57 students completing the assessment. The assessment is worth 50% of a 5 ECTS credit module during final year of a business undergraduate course. The principles of Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018) are applied to the design of the assessment. Specifically this assessment provides multiple means of expression by providing learners with alternatives for demonstrating what they know; and multiple means of engagement by affording students freedom within the syllabus to find a personal area of interest. Correctly implemented, students should be appropriately challenged and, importantly, motivated to learn (Edyburn, 2005). This is achieved by offering 14 subject specific topics from which students are encouraged to find their own assessment themes. Additionally, students could choose three submission formats; essay, podcast or video (Figure 1.).

International Entrepreneurship
Assessment 1: 50% Weighting toward the MAJOR CASE STUDY
Assignment 2: Individual Project, 50% of module grade.

Task Description:

On an individual basis students must submit ONE project method covering ONE project topic.

Method:

- 1 2500-3000 word written essay
- 2 4-5 minute video essay
- 3 7-8 minute podcast

Topics:

- 1 Brexit and Ireland
- 2 Traits of an International Entrepreneur
- 3 Barriers to International Trade
- 4 The Impact of Culture
- 5 Developing the Global Business Plan
- 6 Location Selection
- 7 Business Ethics in a Global Setting
- 8 Market Entry Strategies
- 9 Global Monetary Systems
- 10 The International Technological Environment
- 11 Designing a reward Structure for International Staff
- 12 Managing Globally
- 13 Social Entrepreneurship Across Borders
- 14 Failure Analysis

All projects must be professionally presented and academic references used as required.

Important: I am not a photographer/videographer. All submissions are graded on quality of content, not style over substance.

Marking Scheme:

Please see last pages of assessment document

Submission Criteria:

To be submitted in class Friday May 4th 2018.

Both hard copy and email submission is required.

Figure 1: Overview of Assessment #2 for 50% 5 ECTS Module

Design and Implementation of Assessment Strategy

The module learning outcomes to be assessed with this assignment include:

- Investigating the political, economic, social and cultural environments within which international entrepreneurs operate.
- Analysing and understanding the nature of globalisation as it applies to international business and entrepreneurship.

To achieve this a student-centred approach to the indicative syllabus was considered. This sought to promote active rather than passive learning; increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student; an increased sense of autonomy in the learner; and a mutual respect within the learner teacher relationship (Lea et al., 2003). There are 12 broad subjects of the indicative syllabus which were included in the assessment topic options (Figure 1. #2-13). Additionally, #1 Brexit and Ireland was added for contemporaneous reasons; and #14 Failure Analysis was added as discussions of entrepreneurial failures had been particularly lively with this cohort during lectures. Allowing students to pick their topic area from such a breadth of options is in line with the universal design for learning principles of multiple means of engagement. Dunn et al. (2003) advocate such flexible learning that provides opportunities for students to individually construct and negotiate meanings and learning to their projects.

Multiple means of expression was achieved by offering three types of assessment. The established essay submission, of 2500-3000 words was offered. Two additional means of expression were also offered. These were a 4-5 minute video and a 7-8 minute podcast. Two additional options were considered, namely a picture essay and in-class presentation. The picture essay option was removed as it is was felt that the depth of analysis required of a QQI Level 8 assessment would be difficult to communicate via this format; and the in-class presentation option was removed due to time constraints of a one-term module.

Sutton-Brady et al. (2009) investigated the value of using short-format podcasts to support assessment and found a majority of students believed they gained learning benefits from the podcasts and appreciated the flexibility of the medium to support their learning. Additionally, the lecturers felt the innovation helped diversify their pedagogical approach and support a diverse student population. This study gives credibility to the option of the podcast format. The video essay was offered as an extension of the podcast process but with the added visual medium.

It was important to establish from the outset that students were being marked on the quality of their work and not the style of it. When offering students multiple methods of engagement there is a worry that style over substance may hide some limitations in the learning process. To this end, the grading rubric afforded only 10% to presentation. The remainder of the marking scheme included 30% for analytical skills; 30% for breadth and range of subject knowledge; 20% for flexibility and appreciation of

multiple perspectives; and 10% for evidence of outside reading and/or referencing (Figure 2).

CRITERION	First A/B+ 70%+	2.1 B 60-69%	2.2 B- 55-59%	Pass C/C+ 40-55%	REFER/FAIL D/F 0-39%
1 Presentation of assignment 10%	Shows a polished and imaginative approach to the topic	Carefully and logically organised	Shows organisation and coherence	Shows some attempt to organise in a logical manner	Disorganised/incoherent
2 Analysis 30%	Can analyse new and/or abstract data and situations without guidance using a wide range of techniques appropriate to the topic	Can analyse a range of information with minimum guidance, can apply major theories and compare alternative methods/ techniques for obtaining data	Can analyse with guidance using given classification / principles	Can analyse a limited range of information with guidance using classification / principles	Fails to analyse information
3 Content and range 30%	Comprehensive/detailed knowledge of topic with areas of specialisation is depth and awareness of provisional nature of knowledge	Reasonable knowledge of topic and an awareness of a variety of ideas/ contexts/frame-works	Has given a factual and/ or conceptual knowledge base and appropriate terminology	Evidence of limited knowledge of topic and some use of appropriate terminology	Lacks evidence of knowledge relevant to the topic and/or significantly misuses terminology
4 Flexibility 20%	Independently takes and understands multiple perspectives and through these can develop/adjust personal point of view	Recognises multiple perspectives which may affect personal view point	Can recognise alternative perspectives	Limited ability to see alternative perspectives	Fails to recognise alternative perspectives
5 Referencing 10%	Referencing is consistently accurate	Referencing is mainly accurate	Referencing is mainly accurate	Some attempt at referencing	Referencing is absent or unsystematic

Figure 2. Grading Rubric of Assessment #2 for 50% 5 ECTS Module

It is important to note here that the 10% for evidence of outside reading and/or referencing originally included a minimum number of external academic references. However, following discussion with the students the minimum/maximum was removed which allowed students creating podcasts to engage in roundtable discussions on their subjects without the need for academic referencing, once evidence of research was clear. For example, one student explored #9 'Global Monetary Systems' by way of a roundtable discussion with his peers who had extensive experience trading cryptocurrencies and thus provided a very insightful, balanced and probing analysis, albeit absent of academic references.

In designing the assessment particular attention was paid to what Dunn et al. (2003) refer to as unintended outcomes. Considerable effort was given to mitigate against mismatches in learner-teacher expectations of the assessment. It is important to be wary of what students may consider to be inconsistencies between assessment methods. Reinforcing the value of the grading rubric and frequently ending classes with a quick assessment questions and answers session in audience of the entire cohort facilitated equity of assessment understanding.

Results and Evidence of Impact

Of the 57 students who submitted 36 chose the essay format; 20 chose the podcast format; and one student chose the video format. The average grade achieved on the essays was 63%. The average grade achieved on the podcasts was 69%. Both of these averages are in the B grade band. This suggests that there is parity between the assessment methods chosen by the students. The sole video submission achieved an 80%, A grade and is considered as an outlier.

From the outset, a core goal of this assessment was to be as inclusive as possible. Inclusive assessment techniques are closely mapped to course objectives, and allow students to use combinations of writing, speaking, and other activities to demonstrate mastery of knowledge (Lombardi, et al. 2011). The goal was not to find an assessment method that was to replace the standard essay, but to find a means of student expression of equal merit that allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge in a manner of their choosing, and more appropriate to their skill set. The parity of results achieved by students submitting the essay and those attempting the podcast suggest a legitimacy of equivalence between the two assessment methods.

Interestingly, the student using the video format who achieved the 80% A grade had previous experience with video editing and as such did not have the burden of developing this skillset. Given the reluctance of other students to engage in this format it would suggest that the skills gap present in video production may render this format redundant for many. That being said, the video format still provides a varied means of expression for students who do have an existing skillset and affording these students an opportunity to communicate in a medium with which they are familiar is quite reasonable.

Overall the students reported positively on the breadth of options available; the freedom to select their own area of exploration; and the novelty of podcasts/videos for those who selected these. Students commented that podcasts were not necessarily easier, but provided an alternative to 'essay fatigue'. This suggests a validity in a call for variety of assessment methods to be provided to students throughout their studies.

A minority of students who opted for the essay spoke about the safety of a known method. Given that this assessment was at an Award stage in their studies they were reluctant to risk engaging with an assessment method with which they were not familiar. For students who were content to use the essay format with which they were well-versed, multiple means of engagement was still achieved by offering a breadth of subject areas and provided students autonomy over their chosen subject matter.

Following submissions, concerns were raised by a number of students who expressed worries as to whether fairness across methods could be achieved. Namely, they felt writing an essay with academic referencing was a harder task than discussing a topic amidst sound clips or engaging in a roundtable discussion with peers or conducting an interview with experts. While this had been addressed in class discussion prior to submission there was a small cohort that felt podcasts lacked academic rigour. This is addressed by identifying the elements of the marking scheme such as 'analytical skills' and their presence in the student submissions regardless of format. Additionally, considerable class time toward the end of the semester was devoted to assignment tutorials for all formats. The example given to students to mitigate against these concerns was the concept of a variety of perspectives on a given idea. It was posited that where an essay writer may need two or three quotes from academic sources to show multiple opinions - a podcaster can illuminate a debate with multiple opinions by having a roundtable discussion with a multitude of people. The goal - as per the marking scheme - was to consider multiple perspectives, not necessarily consider multiple academic perspectives.

Chiefly, the most significant observation from the duration of this assessment process was the legitimacy of the podcast method as a means of assessment for learning. Overwhelmingly the feedback from students who chose this method was positive. The common themes in their feedback were a positive impact on their motivation, due mostly to a new means of expression; the challenge and value of autonomy over the topic selection; and, importantly, agreement that the workload was no better or worse, longer or shorter than essays with which they were familiar.

Advice for Implementation

To improve on this assessment going forward it will be important to open and sustain a dialogue with students from the outset and throughout the process; and to be open-minded to their suggestions for increasing the educational value of the assignment. Ultimately, students are partners with the lecturer in the process and should be able to influence the design of the assessment. This will ensure the student-centred nature of the assessment.

The grading rubric is of critical importance as it provides clear guidance to the students as to what is – and what is not – being assessed. As was evidenced with this iteration of the assessment wherein the language and expectations around referencing changed in consultation with students, it is hoped that student feedback will continue to shape and advance the quality of the assessment going forward. In consult with the class cohort it was agreed that no changes (unless in exceptional circumstances) would be made to the grading rubric and assessment deliverables as of four weeks prior to the assessment submission date.

From a lecturer's perspective one of the greatest challenges was to be open-minded to how students interpreted the very definition of a podcast. Even with only 20 submissions to consider, the breadth of meaning evidenced in the submission was significant. It would have been challenging and also counterproductive to set out expected parameters of podcast submissions. Affording students freedom in this regard reinforces the multiple means of expression maxim that was sought.

Finally, the most significant role the lecturer can play during this process is to allow multiple opportunities for pre-submission and to provide formative feedback upon which students can edit and improve their work prior to the final submission. While

this may place an extra workload on the lecturer, the learning opportunities for students – and, indeed, for the lecturer about the assessment – are invaluable. Being part of the learning process in a mutual manner benefited both student and lecturer.

References

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- Edyburn, D.L. (2005) *'Universal design for learning'*, *Special Education Technology Practice*, 7(5), pp. 16-22.
- Lea, S. J., Stephenson, D., and Troy J. (2003) *'Higher Education Students' Attitudes to Student Centred Learning: Beyond 'educational bulimia'*, *Studies in Higher Education* 28(3), pp. 321–334
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