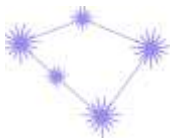


Learning and assessment in distance education

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www.le.ac.uk/beyonddistance



Session objectives

- To demonstrate how assignments can guide the student through the learning process in distance education
- To illustrate how assignments can draw on peer interaction in the online environment
- To consider possible applications in your own teaching

Workshop outline

1. Brainstorm current issues and challenges in assessment at Unisa
2. Case study from Psychology: assessments to engage students in learning
3. Possible applications at Unisa?
4. Case study from a student's perspective: peer collaboration in assessment
5. Possible applications at Unisa?

Case Study: Psychology

- MSc Occupational Psychology
 - Programme with mature and diverse cohort
 - Provides knowledge base for professional practice
 - Students hungry to use their knowledge
 - Abundance of source material (possibly overwhelming)
- How do you feel about assignment instructions that are up to four A4 pages, supported with VLE discussion forums and Podcasts?

Challenges

- Student perspective
 - Time poor
 - Prioritising and being selective
 - Transition to postgraduate and distance learning
 - Lack of confidence in study skills / knowledge
- Staff perspective
 - Lack of student engagement with breadth and depth of material
 - Diversity of learning styles
 - Encouraging and assessing deep learning
 - Differentiation of performance and plagiarism

Assessment to Guide Learning

- Assignment rubric a ‘must read’ across learning styles
- The assignment content is designed to guide students ‘around’ the module material
- Guides them to activities that facilitate surface and deep learning and all across the syllabus
- Assessment instructions are lengthy but clear and re-iterated across different media (PDF, podcast and discussion groups)
- Inclusion of knowledge-based and skill-based outcomes: show knowledge through application

Assignment Structure

- Background / Setting
 - A manufacturing company that wants to change its recruitment process for something better
- Student has a defined role
 - A junior occupational psychologist to review the evidence especially around key topics / issues
- Student faces constraints
 - Client is a non-specialist who will need things explained to them
 - The perfect solution is ruled out (e.g. not enough time resources available)
- Make recommendations
 - Answer ‘so what?’ questions
- Assignment includes the marking criteria

Advantages for Students

- Background / Setting: **Link to practice**
 - A manufacturing company that wants to change its recruitment process for something better
- Student has a defined role: **Navigational aid, prompts efficient study for diverse group**
 - A junior occupational psychologist to review the evidence especially around key topics / issues
- Student faces constraints: **Depth of learning**
 - Client is a non-specialist who will need things explained to them
 - The perfect solution is ruled out (e.g. not enough time resources available)
- Make recommendations: **Develop confidence / apply deep learning**
 - Answer ‘so what?’ question
- Assignment includes the marking criteria: **Focus on usable knowledge and skills, prompt curiosity and creativity**

Advantages for Staff

- Background / Setting: **Guards against plagiarism**
 - A manufacturing company that wants to change its recruitment process for something better
- Student has a defined role: **Sparks engagement, establishes breadth**
 - A junior occupational psychologist to review the evidence especially around key topics / issues
- Student faces constraints: **Differentiates depth of learning**
 - Client is a non-specialist who will need things explained to them
 - The perfect solution is ruled out (e.g. not enough time resources available)
- Make recommendations: **Differentiates performance**
 - Answer ‘so what?’ question
- Assignment includes the marking criteria: **Quality controls alignment with module content / accreditation requirements**

Student Support Mechanisms

- Advice within detailed rubric and criteria
- Podcast from the module convenor
 - Re-iterate key points e.g. “this requires detailed analysis because....”
 - Guidance around known difficult issues e.g. “many students struggle with this, so do not worry. One way around this problem is.....”
 - Authentic “this is your marker speaking!”
 - Guide reading / selection of source material
- Blackboard discussion
 - Moderation twice per week, 12 weeks
 - Peer-peer interaction: it really helps
 - Focus on assessment to scaffold transferable skill development (e.g. point out to students what they are learning)
 - E-moderating skills crucial

Blackboard Learn - Windows Internet Explorer

https://blackboard.le.ac.uk/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=_2_1&url=%2Fwebapps%2Fblackboard%2Fexecute%2Flauncher%3Ftype

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

My Places Home Help Logout

Search:

Home Courses Content Collection Scholar Library Student Support Help

OCCUPATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY and PSYCHOLOGY OF WORK (OCTOBER 2010) - (MSPSSOCDS_DOCT10) PSA Module > PSA Module: Podcasts > Edit Mode: ON

Podcasts to provide guidance on approaching PSA assignments

Podcasts to provide guidance on approaching PSA assignments

Create Item Build Evaluate Collaborate More

- Introduction to Mini-series: Approaching the Assignments**
This short podcast provides an introduction to the other podcasts within this mini-series.
[play](#)
Play:
- Guidance on approaching PSA MA1 (Part 1)**
This podcast provides you with some guidance on how to approach the first Module Assignment within the PSA Module (Part 1 ONLY).
[play](#)
Play:
- General Assignment Guidance**
This podcast contains general guidance that may be useful for any assignment that you write during your course. You may click on the play button below to listen to the podcast, or right-click on the file name above and save it to your computer.
[play](#)
Play:

Done

Internet 100%

start 3hour session Duc... Managers as coac... Screenshot2 - Mic... 3 Windows Explo... 2 PASW Statistic... Leadership Capabil... Blackboard Learn ... 18:17

Parent Post

Author: J. AZZOPARDI
Date: Tuesday, 4 January 2011 09:29:43 o'clock GMT
Subject: RE: Questions about MA1 - Making assumptions

Hi there Jacqui,

Hope u had a lovely festive season. I also thought of briefly discussing the strengths and weaknesses of interviews. Consequently, I thought of justifying why I have chosen to design a structured / semi-structured(not sure yet) interview etc. Then of course how to design it and conduct it. However, Ive struggled to find some really good info on how to design an interview except the Arnold book of course which is frustrating me as I am trying not to use it much.

Glad to see we've got similar ideas on how to structure the MA1!!!

Justin :-)

Dear Justin,

Happy new year!

The Arnold text is a good base (I would say that of course!). Try to use it get you basic understanding up-and-running. The readings for the Module / Units should be your next port of call. These delve more deeply into the issues raised by Arnold et al. Then, as you confidence develops, search the literature yourself (using the electronic library search engines provided by the University library). This will yield recent references that allow you to explore the finer points of the issues and help to ensure that your analysis is up-to-date.

It is also important to remember that your assignment must not be a general essay on selection interviewing. Have a look at how the situation being faced by the organisation might shape your approach. It offers some constraints and some opportunities when attempting to implement best practice. Keep these in mind - and make reference to them when presenting your answer as this will help you achieve the highest possible marks.

With best regards

Ray

Outcomes

- Need for staff ‘training’ (or mentoring)
- Staff workload higher in module preparation more than offset by later gains
- Reduction in VLE traffic
- VLE traffic of higher quality (nicer to moderate)
- Huge drop in remedial work (remedial work done ‘in advance’ and at group level?)
- Improvements in student enjoyment and satisfaction levels

Reflection/ takeaways

- Are assignments being deployed as powerful teaching tools beyond knowledge test to stimulate development of transferable skills?
- How do you feel about the workload / ethics of providing detailed rubric, instructions and support across different media?
- How can assignments be designed to help **both** students and teachers meet their objectives?

How can...

1. An assignment be used to encourage students to participate in online communication with peers?
2. Group collaboration be used in the early stages of an assignment to provide a foundation for individual work in the later stages?

Case study from Education



The screenshot shows the OER Africa website. At the top, the logo for OER Africa is displayed with the tagline "Building African education capacity through openness". Below the logo is a navigation bar with four main sections: "UNDERSTANDING OER", "FINDING OER", "OER IN ACTION", and "USING TECHNOLOGY". To the right of the navigation bar are links for "HOME", "BLOGS", and "FORUMS". On the left side, there is a "Course Materials" menu with a list of items:

- Unit 1: The lifelong distance learner
- Unit 2: Open learning and e-learning
- Unit 3: Supporting learning
- Unit 4: Asynchronous communication
- Unit 5: Tutorials & webconferencing
- Unit 6: Assignments
- Criteria for learner support
- Resources for tutors
- The web in plain English
- Glossary

This assignment comes from a course on Web Publishing by the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland, and was designed by Kaye Cleary.

- <http://www.oerafrica.org/supportinglearners/Unit6/Casestudyacollaborativeassignment/tabid/1072/Default.aspx>

The Task: Part A - Gather Data in Small Working Groups

1. Join a Group by 'signing up' via the link on the home page. This will give you access to a group discussion area.

2. Each member will negotiate a specialist role. These roles align directly with the individual submission (Part B) of Assignment 2. Negotiate specialist roles so that they suit both the individual member and the Group's needs. Roles recommended include:
 - standards (quality of code and adherence to accessibility priorities; browser checks);
 - assistive technologies;
 - navigation and orientation;
 - layout; use of media (including text).

3. Negotiate expectations of specialists, bearing in mind the written work required from this Group process and course netiquette guidelines.
4. Identify a site from each of the three categories. Each specialist will provide a report on the three sites for the Group.

The websites

- Commercial site: The Mini.
 - <http://www.miniusa.com/#/MINIUSA.COM-m>
- Information site: CIA World Factbook
 - <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- Education site: Discover Te Kohinga Taonga.
 - http://find.natlib.govt.nz/primo_library/libweb/static/htmls/discover/

5. Discuss the implications of the specialists' reports. Your aim is to feel comfortable that you have sufficient information for you to undertake a holistic critique of one of the three sites (or another from the list below if you prefer). Please participate in these discussions. You may well find that others will have different views on various aspects of these sites to those held by yourself.

Assessment Submission of Your Contribution to Group Learning

Your goal is to demonstrate the quality of your contributions to the learning process. To do this, you will provide evidence of your contribution to the collaborative efforts of the group's learning for assessment.

The process: Identify 4 discussion postings from the Group which you believe represent your best contributions to the Group's learning. Copy those postings (verbatim, including date/time of posting) into a word document. Then, write a brief rationale and justification which demonstrates the quality of those postings.

The product: Your report should not exceed 500 words (excluding discussion postings).

Marking Criteria

Your submission will be marked according to your ability to **demonstrate evidence of high quality discussion contributions (weighted at 80%)**. This involves explicit linking between the characteristics of high quality discussion contributions and your discussion postings (which should be included in the piece). **Make a clear case which demonstrates the value of your contributions to the Group learning community.**

High quality postings demonstrate several of the following in a single posting:

1. Timeliness of responses (usually within 48 hours)
2. Consideration of issues presented in previous postings
3. Social presence and/or peer support including, but not limited to: emotion, empathy, personal connection
4. Integration or synthesis of ideas from a variety of sources
5. Succinct, but meaningful writing
6. 'Questioning' postings which invite responses and so continue the conversation
7. Offering suggestions

8. Efforts to make meaning and refine current understandings:
- seeking clarification
 - restating information
 - offering tentative interpretations
 - confirming others' statements
 - identification of helpful resources

The Task: Part B – Individual Submission

When analyzing your selected site, ensure that you comment on these key areas:

1. The sites' overall goals and how the site successfully achieves (or fails to achieve) its goal
2. The anticipated target audience (how the design (not the content) accommodates this audience)
3. Information and/or services offered [very brief]
4. In relation to the above areas: layout of key elements (navigation icons, text, etc.) navigational structure use of media elements
5. Compliance with accessibility guidelines
6. Potential problems for user interaction

Link to future assignment

In Assignment 3 you will be asked to apply this understanding to the design of your own web site.

Reflection/ Takeaways

Could you apply any aspects of this approach to assignments in your course?

- What challenges might arise for students?
- What challenges might arise for tutors?



Thanks to psd at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/psd/2086641/>