

AUDIT POSTER: AN EVOLVING ASSESSMENT

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KEYWORDS

Assessment, feedback, posters, performance, results, group work, team work, skills,

SUMMARY

Sarah Turnbull used an alternative assessment tool by asking students to create an academic poster in groups to encourage the students to step out their comfort zone and try out this new form of assessment.

CONTEXT

Sarah Turnbull is a lecturer in Accounting and Finance at Perth College UHI and is presenting on her use of academic posters as a form of assessment which she has been using over a period of 4 years within her lecturing role. This assessment type was introduced when the new accounting and finance degree was launched.

WHAT, WHERE?

4 years ago, I decided to introduce a new type of assessment to my students – an Academic Poster. The academic posters were completed in groups, and groups were made up of three or four from across 3 different academic partners. I decided to implement this task in order to address some of the challenges we know from research that accountants face. The task meant that students had to step out of their comfort zone and encouraged them to work on their communications skills. We know from research that many accountants prefer to work alone, and the role is often worked individually, so this task challenged the students to work as part of a team instead.

The assessment also enabled the students to work on their presentation skills. Often, within an accounting role, you will be required to present information in an appropriate way for others who may not be from a finance background to understand.

WHY?

I decided to experiment with this form of assessment as I witnessed this being used at Edinburgh Napier University and it appeared to be a very effective tool. The academic posters were to be created on Microsoft PowerPoint, which allowed the students to gain a better understanding of PowerPoint and how it can be used. I decided to use this form of assessment as part of the course as often in financial statements, the documents can be a few hundred pages long and can contain many diagrams and charts. This task encouraged students to become more aware of how they can present things visually and to make them aware that it is not all about the figures. This helped the students to develop different ways of communicating information in a user friendly way making accounting information accessible and easy to understand.



I also chose to experiment with this module as it was something different and gave a bit of balance and variation to the types of assessment being used. We needed to introduce other types of assessment which are both allowing the student to be creative but also appropriate to the type of work the students are going into.

DID IT WORK?

When I first started using this assessment tool, I was receiving a lot of emails from students who were alerting my attention to the fact that other students in the group were not engaging with the group work. Many students were hesitant and often resistant to communicate and work alongside students from different Academic Partners they didn't know and had not met before. I took this feedback on board and decided that we would make up the groups with students from the same academic partner, that way they had previously met the students in their group and may find it easier to work with them. I also gave much clearer advice on working together and emphasised that it is part of the course and that the students could be marked down for a lack of contribution to the task. Following on from this, I then introduced an 'Individual Reflection' section of the assessment for students to reflect on their experience during the task and how they feel it went. This also included an area for students to peer mark the other students in their group out of 10 for their contribution to the group work. However, some students struggled to give each other honest marks and were just scoring their peers 10. For Academic Year 2020-21 an unscaled 'pool of marks' system has been introduced.

Students also encountered issues providing evidence that they were communicating as a team. Often students were communicating via email, or by video conferencing platforms, which is not easy to provide evidence of.

I also encountered the problem that PowerPoint presentations cannot be uploaded via Turnitin, our plagiarism detection service, which was hugely important as the documents were then not being checked for plagiarism. To resolve this, I then had to ask students to convert the PowerPoint into a word document and upload it via Turnitin so it could be checked, whilst another team member emailed over the PowerPoint and reference list for me to look over.

I have developed this form of assessment and how I use it over the past 4 years, taking into consideration the feedback I received and made adjustments based on this throughout and have received good feedback over the last year or so, and I am awaiting this year's feedback. I gather from the Individual Reflection task that once most students overcome the initial idea of group working, they eventually do work well as a team and do enjoy doing the research and putting this together as something which is aesthetically pleasing. Based on experiences I have had with my own students over the past 4 years of implementing it; I will continue to use this form of assessment.

If you wish to submit your own case study, or have any questions about this resource please contact:

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