

2004

Editorial 1.2

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Abstract

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Keywords

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The design and management of assessment shapes student learning in ways often not considered. Some academics tend to consider the modes of assessment as somewhat routine if not an afterthought to the much more interesting task of selecting curriculum materials. Likewise, it is surprising how so many studies of learning and teaching seem to overlook student assessment, yet we know that students put assessment at the front and centre of their thinking about their approaches to learning, perhaps more so in higher education where the subject choices are greatest.

The reasons for this apparent lack of interest in assessment vary across the disciplines: tradition and habit are largely to blame. In many cases those responsible for the design and delivery of subjects feel entirely constrained by precedent and regulation, especially from the professions, leaving little or no room for risk-taking and creative approaches to assessment. Academics are also daunted by the challenge of changing the ways students think about assessment in a highly evaluative climate of student feedback on teaching performance. The sheer effort involved in being innovative in the face of student conservatism as to what constitutes fair and reasonable assessment can be off-putting.

However, the rewards for breaking out of the predictable forms of assessment in the process of curriculum design are significant. This is particularly so when assessment has a profound and lasting impact on the lifelong learning behaviours of students. The four papers in this issue of the *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* (JUTLP) maintain the approach and standard set in the inaugural issue that aimed to address a gap between journals centred on theoretical conversations, and those that tend to be somewhat narrowly pragmatic.

Annette Meldrum and Holly Tootell report on their efforts to address the increasingly problematic task of integrating information literacy into the curriculum for IT students. The challenge of implementing the graduate attributes agenda is now firmly embedded in the strategic plans of most universities. Meldrum and Tootell provide some ideas for those struggling with the already overloaded curriculum. Joy Penman reminds us of the centrality of the practicum in its diverse forms that is so often overlooked in broader discussions of assessment practices. Penman illustrates the importance in any assessment process of focussing on learning outcomes, and especially the ways in which systematic evaluation can inform the managing and assessment of the student experience.

Edwina Pio's paper illustrates the importance of working from a scholarly background and rationale for an unconventional approach to assessment in business studies. The subject of the course 'Management and Spirituality' provides fascinating opportunities for re-thinking assessment, and Pio shows how she approached the challenge. Finally, Maureen Morris, Anne Porter and David Griffiths provide the reader with a strong basis for improving our understanding of the ways in which assessment can shape learning. While it is highly relevant to the higher education sector generally, the paper has particular relevance to the statistics community

This issue keeps JUTLP on track in its desire to meet the needs of its readers: practitioners looking for good ideas based soundly on a body of accessible theory and research.

Craig McInnis
Guest Editor