# Tip sheet - Creative online assessment

This tip sheet provides some strategies for rethinking online assessments from a more creative and fun perspective. Exploring and maximising the online teaching space can lead to alternative types of assessment. There are many alternatives to exams but the online environment opens broader possibilities for both summative and formative assessments. The range of tools available in the online space can help students interact with topic material in different ways. Remember, assessment can be any activity or task that evaluates the journey toward achieving the topic learning outcomes. Formative assessment (with feedback but not grades) is especially useful in keeping students on track with their learning.

## Be authentic

Consider how your assessments apply to real life – how are the students applying what they learn to real life scenarios? How will it help them once they are in the workforce? There are many creative alternatives to essays so consider what skills graduates in fields related to your topic might use and brainstorm.

For example:

- In a social work topic, have students access an online health database (e.g. Australian Institute for Health and Welfare) to analyse and evaluate available homelessness services and their usage in their local area (or another similar task of their choice)
- In a computer programming topic, have students develop a formal brief about a project of their choice outlining project requirements and parameters
- In an ethics topic, form a live ethics committee comprised of students and have them review a previewed ethics application via Collaborate.

## Make the most of digital resources

Encourage students to use their computers for curating and creating knowledge. Consider greater use of multimedia tools (e.g. creating videos, digital storytelling, concept maps) in demonstrating knowledge or skills.

For example:

- In an engineering topic, show a picture of a bridge and have the students identify why the bridge was built the way it was and what specifications may have been required (via virtual debate or written / video submission)
- In a nutrition topic, ask the students to look at online nutrition tools, evaluate and recommend one based on what they learned in class
- In an art history topic, have students view artworks online in the Flinders University Museum of Art to compare and contrast or explore origins of Australian Indigenous artworks

## Take advantage of the students' environments

Our students come from very diverse backgrounds, all with their own stories and experiences. Consider leveraging student diversity into your assessments so the students are learning with, and from, each other. This might include flexible assessments which allow the students (where appropriate) to select their own topic of focus within a defined structure or theme. Providing students with this type of choice is especially important in cross-College first year elective topics as it saves staff from needing to be an expert in everything and allows the student to take control of what they learn and follow their passion. You could include student in-class presentations as part of the assessment, thus extending everyone's learning.

For example:

- In an anthropology course, ask students to digitally map and explain locations of cultural significance in their hometown using multimedia tools (e.g. audio, video, images)
- In an occupational therapy topic, ask students to undertake a home assessment of their own home for a particular condition or disability of their choice. Include a virtual tour (e.g. video, images) as part of the brief (remember to maintain privacy)
- In a health topic, ask students to research a particular health service in their local area (e.g. to evaluate range, context or coverage of services provided).

## Collaborate (the verb, not the tool)

Social connections and networks are crucial when learning online and students need to keep in touch, especially when they aren't seeing their classmates for long periods (or at all). Isolation when studying online is a very real consideration. Collaboration is a great way to build communities of learning within student groups and for them to make connections. Working as part of a team is also a valued graduate skill in the global workplace. Plan for different kinds of collaboration. (e.g. divisible tasks – where tasks are divided and then integrated into an end result; conjunctive tasks – where everyone contributes a unique piece to the overall task).

For example:

- In a health course, students are given a scenario in the form of physician-directed patient care, they must all assume different health professional roles to develop a care plan for the patient
- In a French topic, students work collaboratively in a wiki to compose a short story in that language
- In any topic, have students use a wiki to form a debate team and have them debate via Collaborate or in person.

## Make the most of your (industry) partners and stakeholders

Most staff in various disciplines have connections to industry or the sector that they are working in or with. Make the most of these connections and make learning real for students by introducing guests that can stimulate conversation.

For example:

- In an Indigenous palliative care topic, record an interview with an Indigenous leader on grief and loss to help prompt conversation on "sorry business"
- In a medical ethics topic, invite guest speakers (or record podcast interviews) to share practice early in the topic to assist students to understand the topic's significance
- In a creative arts topic, have students create a short film for a non-government organisation.

Remember to check the topic learning outcomes, aligning assessments to them so that students can clearly demonstrate what they have learnt. It can be helpful to include a brief list of the aims of the assignment, clearly articulating their connection with the learning outcomes so the students can understand which learning outcomes are being assessed and why they are being asked to do the activities therein. The online environment provides many opportunities for us and our students to engage with topic material in a different and creative way, including in assessment. Be imaginative!

Adapted in part from: https://ctl.wiley.com/creative-methods-of-assessment-in-online-learning/