If we build it, will they come?
Developing an online assessment resource for educators at UNSW

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Through the Assessment AS Learning Toolkit, on the new Teaching Gateway at University of New South Wales (UNSW) educators and academics have the opportunity to find ideas, guidelines, and practical strategies on the holistic processes of designing online assessment as learning. This toolkit has been devised to collect and share resources and includes practical strategies for selecting technologies that suit the learning objectives and outcomes of courses and programs to support more effective and efficient assessment. The premise throughout this Toolkit is that assessment should focus primarily on learning and the achievement of intended learning outcomes. This poster seeks to showcase the range of online assessment practices being used at UNSW to enhance student learning.

Keywords: Technologies for assessment; professional development; blended learning; online assessment.

Building a Toolkit

In this poster we describe our experiences of developing this online resource for teaching staff as UNSW developed new strategies for assessment AS learning (See Figure 1). The online resources developed have been designed to provide support in selecting assessment with practical strategies on the holistic processes of designing online assessment while also providing discipline specific resources that focus on faculty experience. The Toolkit has included the building of professional development resources for staff and to enable them to share their own practice though short videos and video case studies and scenario video clips in situ.

Figure 1: UNSW Assessment AS Learning Toolkit

Why develop an online assessment resource for educators at UNSW?
It was found that many academics at UNSW were keen to develop more innovative and student focused assessment however, they were often in need of assistance to undertake such changes. At the same time there were others who were willing to share with their colleagues during seminars and workshops how they were integrating technology and introducing varied assessment techniques into their assessment practices. A common request was “Will you be recording this? Can I get a copy?” Concurrently with this, as well the creation of a new Teaching Gateway, the Vice Chancellor instigated a University wide review of assessment seeking to make assessment more efficient and effective. It was decided that the best way to harness the resources that were available within our own academic staff to support such changes to practice would be to develop a toolkit (modeled on Macquarie University’s toolkit) of resources fully available online to those teaching both within and beyond the University.

Selecting Technologies for Assessment
This poster focuses on the technologies for assessment resource to support technology in assessment processes.
To support educators, the toolkit offers strategies and benefits of utilising technology (See Figure 2) for assessment to help learners engage more productively and flexibly in their course learning and assessment, and can help staff manage assessment more efficiently and effectively. The Toolkit resource seeks to promote how learning can be more flexible when students can choose when and where they access content and engage in learning and assessment online. This flexibility helps students to regulate their own learning and play a role in the process. Using tools such as discussion forums and wikis, educators can record student group processes and support students more flexibly as they progress through assessment tasks. This support and ownership can aid in developing a more student-centred approach to learning and assessment and provide students with a space to learn, reflect and develop connections between knowledge ideas.

In many cases, technology-improved efficiencies in managing assessment also benefit students educationally. For example, providing online multiple-choice quizzes with automated marking and feedback may ultimately reduce staff marking loads, as well as giving students immediate feedback on their learning performance. Other strategies from the Toolkit suggest how blending technologies with face-to-face teaching, learning and assessment can:

- enable online submission of assignments.
- enhance students' assessment-as-learning experiences.
- give students more ways to learn and to demonstrate their learning.
- enable staff to reconsider learning and teaching approaches.
- introduce innovative assessment methods
- help staff give timely and more comprehensive feedback, and
- improve teachers' efficiency in managing large volumes of marking and administration.
- support students' learning process, through automated assignment receipts, and marking and feedback records.
- support students as they develop graduate capability skills such as communication, global citizenship and professional skills (eportfolio).

The overall satisfaction of the analytics (see Figure 3) on the Toolkit pages have suggested that 1233 unique visitors in Sydney using the identifier ‘assess’ have accessed the Online assessment Toolkit in the last 6 months. This suggests that we have more work to do in delivering the content to faculty, however, as the Internet enables the views from outside users and externals is currently on the rise we assume that content as a professional development resource is valid and required in the field.
Will they keep coming?
The Assessment Toolkit will continue to be analysed, built upon and presented to faculty. It will also continue to be developed to present how emerging technologies can enable assessment and learning to develop digitally literate 21st century citizens. It will also continue to provide a world-class set of resources available to anyone wishing to enhance their own assessment practice within a global audience.

References

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