

# OnlineHE-UNIC

## Axis 6: Assessment and Evaluation providing recommendations and constructive feedback using online means.

### Theoretical part

#### Learning outcomes

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
K5.1. define the types and challenges of online assessment	S5.1. apply effective techniques to solve common challenges of online assessment	A.5.1. plan the development of effective assessment
K5.2. describe common methods of online assessment	S5.2. select suitable methods to assess students online	A.5.2. share ideas regarding the creation of effective online assessment
K5.3. define good practices for providing feedback online	S5.3. provide appropriate feedback when teaching online	A.5.3. collaborate with colleagues to create assessment activities

### Topic 1: Types and challenges of online assessment

Like in face-to-face instruction, the aim of online assessment is to identify students' skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes by gathering relevant information. This way, we spot areas for improvement and we make sure that the learning content and process meets the learning needs and achieves the objectives. With assessment, students are always aware of their progress, their strengths and weaknesses.

To create effective online assessment, you have to identify **why you are assessing your students** and **what challenges arise from the online format/modality**.

**#1: Why are you assessing the students?** Based on the purpose of assessment, there are three broad types:

- **diagnostic assessment:** it is done prior to the instruction (e.g., before a new course/lesson/unit/topic) to identify the initial knowledge, skills, and attitudes of learners. The goal is to understand where students are - intellectually, emotionally or ideologically - to make informed decisions related to your teaching approach.
- **ongoing/formative assessment:** it is done during the instruction (e.g., a synchronous session, throughout the course delivery) to identify the ongoing/current knowledge, skills, and attitudes of learners. The goal is to get insights into students' ongoing learning progress to make any changes in the teaching approach as required (e.g., provide clarifications, explanations, recommendations to students, critical feedback).
- **summative assessment:** it is done at the end of the instruction (e.g., end of a course/lesson/unit/topic) to identify the final knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired and developed by the learners. The goal is to find out whether the learning objectives set at the beginning have been achieved. You can also compare the results of the summative assessment with the results gathered through the diagnostic assessment.

## #2: What are the challenges of online assessment?

- a) the physical distance between instructor and student
- b) the adaptations of the assessment due to the online context and usage of technology means
- c) the workload, deadlines, and time management
- d) the validity: whether the assessment covers the learning objectives set.
- e) the trustworthiness: whether we can trust the results of the assessment (e.g., we have responded to cheat prevention, inclusiveness & accessibility).

### How to tackle such challenges:

#### Physical distancing:

- break up the assessment into smaller tasks so that you can monitor, intervene, and provide feedback step-by-step throughout the process
- hold virtual office hours, 1-to-1 meetings, and make yourselves available online, especially in the period before any important assignment
- use tools to monitor the students' process. You can see the "history" data such as who accessed the material, for how long, and help students as needed, by increasing your presence.
- organise synchronous sessions in advance (e.g., web meetings) to discuss with your students the assessment prerequisites, letting them plan their studying

#### Adaptations of assessment:

- use of tools in line with your assessment objectives
- make sure that students know how to use these tools and access any digital resources

#### Workload, deadlines, and time management

- communicate the expectations, give clear instructions and inform students about the grading method well in advance. Students need to know how to succeed. You have to include such information in the study guide of the course, which should be available in the LMS platform you are using. Provide any further explanation and clarifications during the synchronous sessions.
- use online calendars (part of an LMS or external tools) to notify and keep students updated about the teaching progress and the upcoming assessment.

- make sure that you have considered the extra time needed for completion of online tasks in terms of technical difficulties (e.g., Internet connectivity, students' familiarisation with the tools etc.).

### **Validity:**

- make sure that the tasks and/or questions your students have to complete ask them to use the knowledge/skills defined by the learning objectives.

### **Trustworthiness:**

#### **1. Cheating:**

- Incorporate tasks where students are asked to create something innovative rather than recalling information from memory.
- Do not rely only on one method of assessment. A combination of tasks allows you to draw a bigger picture about students' performance.
- Hold additional oral discussions with students to clarify whether they indeed completed an individual task on their own.
- Use plagiarism check tools for written assignments/tasks. Such tools measure the originality of the written work that students submit electronically.
- Use proctoring software for the trustworthiness of written exams where students have to answer questions with closed books. Tools like [Proctorio](#), [ProctorU](#) record students' environment to detect any "suspicious" movements and actions (e.g., open a browsing page, use notes, etc.)

#### **2. Accessibility:**

- Make sure that there are assistive technologies for students in need of support (e.g., text-to-speech/speech-to-text recognition, subtitles/live captions, etc.)
- Ensure the accessibility of the online material. You can consult the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#captions-live>). These include keyboard navigation, text alternatives for images, considerations for time-based media and accessible use of language.

Additional reading: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/wp-content/uploads/images/AssessingOnlineLearning-OC.pdf>

## Topic 2: Online methods of assessment

Warm up: write examples of how they assess their students online (Padlet?)

Before selecting how you will actually assess your students, think of why you are assessing them. In case of ongoing and summative assessment, you always have to bring up the learning objectives whose achievement you want to measure. What should the students be able to know/do, at what extent and in which conditions? Remember that having specific measurable verbs in your learning objectives help you observe your students' behaviour. This will guide you to select the most appropriate method.

There is not one simple categorisation of online assessment methods. However, the most common methods used in Higher Education are the following:

1. **Written assignments:** students prepare individually or collaboratively and submit a written work online. Assignments are typically used for ongoing assessment of students' knowledge/skills. In HE, the written assignments tend to contribute to the course completed: the grades gathered are combined with the final grades gained through exams. Examples of written assignments include research papers, case study responses, problem-solving responses, short essays, reports based on fieldwork (students collect field data and write up some kind of report).
2. **Presentations and Online Interviews:** students are assessed orally through presentations, 1-1 sessions either presenting their individual/group work or online interviews. Depending on why you are assessing students, the oral work can be an assignment (ongoing assessment) or final exam (summative assessment).
3. **Online discussions:** students engage with synchronous or asynchronous discussion activities. Asynchronous discussions can be done on a discussion board, blog, forum, or wiki. Synchronous discussions can be done via web conferencing.
4. **Written exams:** these are the typical traditional assessments composed of quizzes (e.g., multiple-choice, short answer questions) or open-ended questions.
5. **Projects:** projects can take any form and format, from recording videos to delivering presentations. This way, they can include one or more of the methods discussed earlier. They mainly focus on the creation of a final "product". This can be something tangible or more abstract, digital or not, which typically requires innovation and creativity on behalf of the students. Even though there are specific skills tested and criteria based on which students will be assessed, we can let students be flexible on how to approach and produce something.
6. **Online polls/surveys:** students complete a poll/survey before, during, or after an instruction. These activities are short and used mainly to track students' understanding while actively engaging them.

To improve the effectiveness of assessment and promote the transfer of knowledge to the real world, try to incorporate more alternative/authentic assessment approaches. Authentic assessment reflects a real life situation which means that it:

- is realistic.
- requires higher order thinking skills (e.g., judgement, critical thinking, innovation/creativity)
- resembles the contexts in which the students will actually use the new knowledge, skills, attitudes learned throughout an instruction
- includes "complex" tasks, meaning that they are not solved on the spot or with minimum effort but require multiple skills.
- gives students time and space for reflection and improvement through feedback

- allows for collaboration and group work

Using the above elements, you can improve the degree of “authenticity” of all the assessment methods you choose to follow. Even a multiple choice quiz can include questions that require students to solve a problem using higher order thinking skills than rote memorization.

Look at the following examples of assessment tasks prepared for different subject areas:

- Education: Create a classroom management plan and/or lesson plan for the student’s subject matter and/or intended audience.
- Business: Develop a business plan for a company in the student’s location and desired field.
- Computer Science: Troubleshoot faulty code or create a website or application.

In all these cases, students engage with higher order thinking skills where they create, develop, find solutions, similar to a real life situation.

How can we adapt them for the online context? possible answers:

- Education=online presentation, online collaborative document, wiki
- Business= online presentation, online collaborative document, wiki
- Computer science: website shared online via LMS, google drive, synchronously in web conferencing

### **Practices of authentic assessment:**

- a) **E-portfolios:** each student prepares an electronic/ digital space that acts as a repertoire and exhibition of their creations. Specifically, the students gather all their works produced throughout a course and an academic year (e.g., a research paper, a project, a presentation) and include them into an online space for anyone interested to access them. The online space can be a site or a simple google folder.

Available tools (free or low cost)

- b-learning (CANVAS) has an e-portfolio tool.
- any type of blogging and/or site creation tools: Wordpress, Wix, Edublog, Google Sites

[Video:](#) E-Portfolios in Education-An ideal way to assess online

- b) **Self- assessment:** such tasks focus on letting students monitor and reflect on their progress. Self-assessment can have the format of a quiz, a game-based activity, a checklist, a survey, or a mind map-concept mapping (students draw connections between concepts they have learned). Even though it is beneficial to access such information in case we need to help our students, self-assessment is not about grading.

## Topic 3: Good practices for online feedback

Similar to face-to-face instruction, In the online learning environment, the purpose of giving feedback is to inform students about their performance level and the degree of achievement of concrete competences.

Students can get feedback from:

1. **The instructor.** It is a common rule that the instructor needs to be present and give feedback that supports students. You can provide feedback orally, audiovisual (recording a video for your students) or in written form, via synchronous or asynchronous communication. In these terms, technology will be the means that will support you. For example, you can add comments after students have submitted their work in the LMS or add comments in a collaborative working document while the students are working on a paper.
2. **The technology.** One-to-one teacher-student feedback is the golden rule for quality feedback but it isn't always practical or possible on a regular basis. This is where digital tools come to help. Many tools have a range of feedback options. You can offer feedback for students who get the answer correct (e.g., positive comment, redirection to another learning source), specific tips for students who answer incorrectly, and general feedback for all students. There are also options for custom feedback. For this, we might need to think about students' potential answers to questions such as what they tend to do wrong.
3. **Other peers.** Peer-to-peer feedback is a common practice in face-to-face environments which can be easily applied in online formats. A peer feedback process can involve the following:
  - Step 1: The instructors communicate the outcomes and expectations for an activity
  - Step 2: The students give feedback
  - Step 3: The students receive feedback
  - Step 4: All reflect on the feedback
  - Step 5: The students apply the skills learned

Make sure that you use peer review for formative feedback only. It is important that you assist students in terms of how to provide feedback. For example, give them:

- specific rules and instructions (be clear about what should they do and not do)
  - checklists/rubrics with criteria they can use in this process. Have students do a self-assessment using the rubric first and guide them throughout by observing their actions to intervene if necessary. Prior to starting the peer review, you can also model the expected behaviour.
4. **Themselves.** This is what we call "self-assessment". You can provide students with a checklist or rubric including specific criteria to help them reflect on their progress. By circling or checking off a criterion on a rubric, students can see which competencies they have mastered or which proficiencies they have to improve.

In the online context a transactional distance is often evident. This is the "psychological" distance created in an online context due to the lack of immediate physical contact. To minimise that distance, feedback needs to be:

- **Personalised:** includes specific reference to the student's response, goals, strengths, needs, and/or questions, rather than a general comment applied to everyone. Many tools allow you to communicate directly with your students (e.g., private replies in forums, private messages, private comments to answers).
- **Goal-oriented:** aligns with the learning objectives set at the beginning of the course and the success criteria. You can find key milestones throughout a course when feedback is crucial to be given, allowing the learning to progress.
- **Tangible and clear:** includes clear evidence and reference to what is correct and wrong, what needs improvement. You can use the sandwich method: positive comment on the effort, highlighting the good elements of the work - critical comment on what needs improvement, what needs to be done - final positive comments for closure.
- **Action-oriented:** includes suggestions for next steps and further action that will allow the students to reflect, be critical, and know how to improve. Actionable feedback is more beneficial than generic feedback, such as "Nice work!" that does not lead to any reflection or analysis. To ensure that students read and use the feedback you can ask them to:
  - do a self-assessment before the review and compare their observations to the feedback
  - summarise the feedback they received and note the changes they made in their revised assignment/work
  - do a self-assessment of the revised work and refer to the changes they make
- **Timely:** is given on time and when is needed for students to improve faster. For instance, it is best if students' answers are answered within 24-48 hours and responses on assignments are given within a week. Be present online at least five times per week.
- **Consistent:** is given in a consistent, stable manner. Feedback interactions also need to be frequent. For instance, update students on their progress every week.
- **Distributed:** is dispersed across the course rather than massively given before an important assignment or exam. You can structure the course in such a way that opportunities for feedback are spread and exist on an ongoing basis.
- **Culturally relevant:** considers students' background. For instance, it includes both praises and corrective comments, or maintains the element of anonymity, based on the cultural background. If language/syntax/grammar is not an integral part of your subject, avoid emphasising or correcting such mistakes by focusing on the content.

Additional reading:

[How to Help Students Give Effective Peer Response](#)

[Using Rubrics for Peer Review](#)

## Practical part

### Scenario activity

#### Context

A group of academics in the field of Online/Distance learning will visit your University for a study visit. In one of the various events organised, you will discuss and exchange ideas about methods of online assessment. You have decided to collaborate with a group of colleagues and present some examples of online assessment to get feedback and recommendations for improvement.

#### Work in groups and:

- a. define at least 2 learning objectives for a hypothetical course/unit
- b. prepare 1 formative and 1 summative assessment activities used to measure i) whether the students progress properly and ii) whether the objectives have been met
- c. write a short description of what this activity is about and what the participants are asked to do, including a short explanation of the tech tools you would use
- d. are there any potential challenges that may arise? What measure will you take for these?
- e. explain the way students will get feedback

Upon completion of the group work you will provide feedback to the other group members, based on the tasks you had to complete.

*For the trainer to give feedback.*

Participants will be assessed based on

- **the appropriateness of answers** (adequately answer to all points and provide feedback to the other groups)
- **the quality of the assessment activities** (they are in line with the objectives-measure them), appropriate activities for the types of assessment, justification of tech tools, justification of feedback provision, appropriate measures for the challenges that may arise etc.)
- **the appropriateness of the tech tool**