

Can authentic assessment improve student engagement and employability skills?

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What is authentic assessment?

A form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills (Mueller, 2006).

An assessment requiring students to use the same competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to apply in professional life (Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner, 2004, p. 69).

Authentic assessment – why ?

- **Student voice:** employability, assessment and feedback is an important theme for NUS & **UPSU**.
- **TEF emphasis on DLHE.**
- Need to improve **student engagement and motivation** enhanced by real world problems in assessment (Knight & Yorke, 2003).
- UoP review of Assessment Policy (2012) included the need to **design authentic assessment** thus requiring employability to be embedded in the curriculum.

Student voice:

'The relevance of our field trip to London with the specific module I was studying at the time was very effective, and definitely helped me when completing my assessment for this module.' SPQ 2017

'More real-life industry practice would have been helpful in things like pitching to clients, etc.' NSS 2017

'The assignments are mostly relevant and the experience enables me to learn within the appropriate environment and develop my professional judgement and personality.' NSS 2017

'I think it would be beneficial if we were pushed to work more externally in preparation for leaving university and having that safety net removed.' SPQ 2017

(NSS & SPQ Plymouth 2017)

Assessment Model @Plymouth

Feed-in

Authentic case study from Land Registry, marking criteria, briefing by industry contact, prep exercise, develop assignment during practical sessions



Feedback

Written & verbal, tutor and industry contact, award ceremony for best work



Feed-forward

Continuous formative peer and tutor feedback during practical sessions, group progress meetings with industry contact, one-to-one sessions with tutor



Authentic assessment – sharing practice

In groups: on flipchart paper

10 mins: Share examples of authentic assessment in your disciplines.

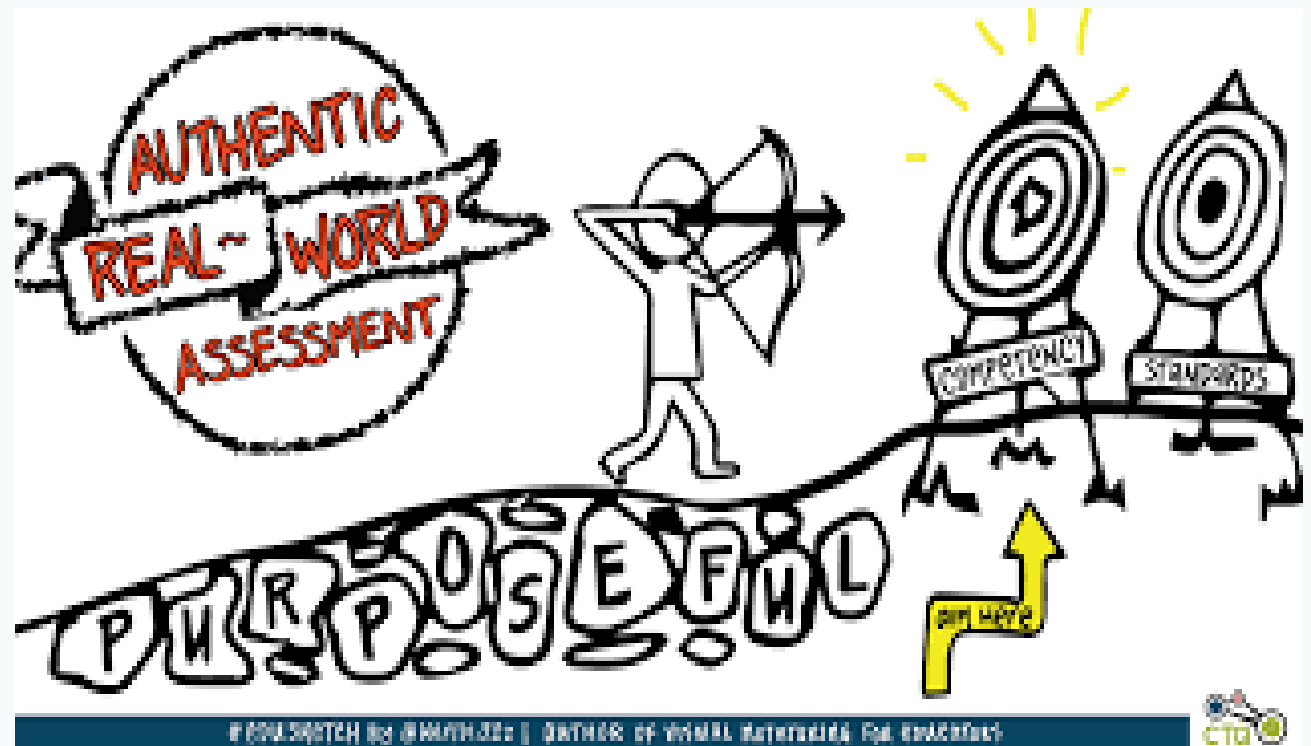
For each example

- What are the benefits?
- What are the challenges?

5 mins: Feed back and focus on benefits of ONE example.

We will talk about challenges later.

Assessment examples



Micro employer interviews

- Employer Insights: Kingston University
- Small groups of 2nd year students visit a practitioner from their discipline.
- They film a short interview using a pre-agreed discussion guide.
- Students interrogate practitioners about current developments in the industry and ask job securing advice.
- Films are assessed and presented to the rest of the class to stimulate discussion and debate.
- <https://www.srhe.ac.uk/conference2014/abstracts/0051.pdf>

Science conference

Students write abstract, present paper at a 'conference' and write reflection on practice <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0309826032000062478>

High Stakes

- Present research at conference
- Alongside employers and 'rival' students
- Assessed (including employers)

Skills Rich

- Working under pressure
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Time management
- Independence
- Self-confidence
- Organisational awareness

Student: *"It was very exciting meeting these people and I actually felt like a professional person."*

Employer: *"Very much looked forward to this year. Stimulating, thought provoking and eye-opening...good to see student work of this calibre."*

Storytelling Projects

- Based on ‘**Storying Sheffield**’: this is delivered across a wide range of disciplines (e.g. humanities, health, architecture, sociology, engineering, science etc.)
- Students collect discipline related stories using a range of media, audio, art, photographs, films, presentations, written, e-journals etc.
- *Storying Sheffield* findings:-
 - Offers new frames of reference & critical skills
 - Increased social and community awareness
 - Developed a range of interdisciplinary knowledge and experience

Enhancing employability through dissertations.

- Using student dissertations for the benefit to society & offer students an insight into the challenges of the real working world.
- Students work with an organisation to conduct research and write the dissertation report.
- 'Dissertations for Good' (NUS) offer an online portal to match organisations, research topics, and students.

www.nus.org.uk/dfg

*University of Plymouth & Metro Fresh Ltd
(MSc dissertation for Dietetics: Food Vulnerability)*

Humanities examples

- Collaborative practice modules - students work experience engaging with professionals, critical reflection through blogs
- Students and employers work together on real life projects
- Audition tasks & rehearsal critique (performance)
- Discipline related writing tasks to develop appropriate language
- Editing tasks – English and publishing real life case studies

Assessment methods and formats – are they authentic and if not, what would make them authentic?

Story board

Exhibition

E-journal

Leaflet

Poster

Video /

Podcast

Field work

Wiki

Blogs

Debate

Conferences

Viva

Research bid

Case Study analysis

Simulation (OSCEs)

Performance

Reflective journal

Portfolio

Report based

Essay

Lab: reports

Presentation

Exams

- Seen
- Open book
- Case based

How can we address the challenges?

In groups: on flipchart paper

5 mins: Address one challenge previously identified.

For each challenge, consider how this can be addressed and possibly overcome.

Remember the questions! Make notes.

5 mins: Feed back to group.

References

Brown, S. (2007) *Feedback and Feed-forward*. Centre for BioScience Bulletin 22.

Gulikers, J., Bastiaens, T. & Kirschner, P. (2005) *Perceptions of authentic assessment and the impact on student learning*. Paper presented at The First International Conference on Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Assessment, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong.

Knight, P. T. & Yorke, M. (2003) *Assessment, Learning and Employability*. Maidenhead, OU Press.

Mueller, J. (2006) *Authentic Assessment Toolbox*. Accessed <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whatisit.htm#looklike>.