



Accommodating AfL practice in a high-stakes EAP pre-session course

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BACKGROUND TO PEAP @ NTU

- around 250 students annually on the 10 week courses
- EGAP and mixture of PG, UG and PhD students
- 4 course components - Integrated Skills, Ac. Listening, Ac. Reading into Writing and Ac. Speaking
- gatekeeping role – students must pass to progress to degree study

PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT APPROACH

- summative assessment at end of course
- assessment of all skills (to satisfy UKVI requirements)
- assessment comprises coursework essay, group presentation and 3 tests (reading, writing and listening)

PROBLEMS WITH PREVIOUS APPROACH

- assessment is 'end-loaded' with focus on end product
- limited opportunities for formative assessment
- poor early engagement with assessed tasks
- some students adopting a 'surface approach' to learning

THE NEW APPROACH

We wanted an approach to assessment which would:

- allow students to distribute effort more evenly (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004)
- rebalance summative and formative elements
- encourage a focus on process as well as end product
- promote early critical engagement with assessment tasks
- enable iterative cycles of feedback and 'feedforward' (Carless, 2007)
- allow summative assessment to be staged and marks distributed so that no element is too high-stakes
- recognise that students can be both deep *and* strategic in their learning (Entwistle, Tait & McCune, 2000)
- use the powerful extrinsic motivation of grades (marks 'in the bag') to enhance intrinsic motivation
- provide students with tasks requiring real, valuable learning – so they see more in it for them than 'just marks'
- provide scope for the development of assessment literacy

COURSEWORK ESSAY

- now assessed by means of an **essay plan** (10%), a **first draft feedback viva** (20%) and a **final draft** (70%)
- students receive formative feedback on plan, first draft and viva
- further feedback through peer review exercise and formative use of Turnitin text matching software
- the final draft is assessed for argument and organisation, language, style and presentation, and use of sources and referencing



OUTCOMES AND ISSUES

- clear evidence of earlier and sustained engagement with topic and task
- students appreciate staged summative assessment
- fewer incidents of plagiarism – greater confidence to develop voice
- more evidence of improvement between first and final drafts

BUT

Should a plan (inherently preliminary and individual) be assessed?

Does an oral viva have a place in the assessment of academic writing?

GROUP ACADEMIC PRESENTATION

- now assessed by means of a **log of group research and planning activity** (10%) and the **final group presentation** (90 %)
- students receive formative feedback on their group log and a preliminary presentation plan



OUTCOMES AND ISSUES

- more evidence of collaborative research and planning
- greater early engagement with task
- marked improvement in quality of final presentation

BUT

How can a collaborative research and planning task be assessed?

How can we best assess group and individual performance in a presentation?

ACADEMIC LISTENING

- now assessed by means of a **reflective log of extensive listening using targeted strategies** (10%) and a **final listening test** (90%)
- the test is focussed on lecture listening skills



OUTCOMES AND ISSUES

- greater engagement with extensive listening
- more effective reflection on listening strategies

BUT

Can extensive listening be assessed in a valid way?

Can we assess a reflective log summatively?