



Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for
advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Alternative Assessment – Authentic Assessment

Many faculty members in universities often discover that there is some element of disconnection between what they have taught and what students have learned. Some students forget much of what has been taught after the final examination. Many of the traditional tests that are used in higher education are of limited value in terms of guiding student learning. In fact, some of these approaches to assessment are not in keeping with the current thinking about assessing student learning outcomes.

Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/>) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

In teaching and learning today, there is much talk about creating learning opportunities that lead to critical thinking skills, deepening the communication skills of students and of course to ensure that students acquire life skills that will allow them to adapt meaningfully in the work environment. From this perspective, it must be borne in mind that assessment in many cases is that glue that binds the course together, linking component parts such as objectives, content instructional strategies and skills development. Therefore it is very important that assessment is carefully considered developed and applied. Changes in the structure and content of the course ought to be correlated to changes in the assessment strategies.

There needs to be a shift to alternative and definitely innovative assessment strategies that promote deep learning approaches and provide meaningful feedback during a course. Performance based assessment that are authentic are indeed alternative approaches to assessment. Two popular formats of alternative assessment are authentic and portfolio assessment. In this issue the focus is on authentic assessment that is assessment that is real or real to

Authentic Assessment

In authentic assessments, students are asked to demonstrate proficiency by doing something. They are usually called on to demonstrate understanding by performing some task (usually a complex task). This task might be an example of a meaningful application of the knowledge that was learned in the course. In this kind of assessment students are asked to analyze, synthesize and apply the knowledge that they have constructed. In the process students create new meaning since tasks such as performances, products and constructed-response items require more direct application of the knowledge and skills that have been constructed. For a good authentic assessment, the task must be meaningful and demonstrate higher-level thinking. The students must be informed before the task how they will be assessed. The assessment task should seek to test whether or not the objectives of the course have been realised.

Performance Types of Authentic Assessment

You can provide questions that prompt students to think about course content and then ask them to create a performance that will show their understanding of various concepts and skills, their ability to apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate.

Examples include:

- Conducting an experiment
- Musical, dance or dramatic performances
- Debates
- Athletic competition
- Oral presentation



Product Types of Authentic Assessment

You can provide prompts, perhaps questions or scenarios and then ask students to construct a product that will demonstrate their understanding of various concepts and skills and/or provide exposure for their abilities in applying knowledge, analyzing issues, synthesizing material or evaluating.

Examples include:

- Essays, stories or poems
- Research reports
- Extended journal responses
- Art exhibit or portfolio
- Lab reports
- Newspaper
- Poster

Constructed Response Types of Authentic Assessment

You might want to provide prompts that elicit response from students that is constructed from their engagement with old and new knowledge. There is usually no exact response to constructed response items; students will construct a response that is different from the other responses of other students. These kinds of response items create opportunities for students to reveal some of their thinking. Teachers will therefore get a peek into the heads of learners.

Examples include product-like Engagements:

- Short-answer essay questions
- Show your work
- Concept maps
- Figural representation (e.g., Venn diagram)
- Journal response

Performance-like Activities:

- Typing test
- Complete a step of science lab
- On demand, construct a short musical, dance or dramatic response
- On demand, exhibit an athletic skill



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