**Authentic assessment**

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 **What is authentic assessment?**

There is no single definition of authentic assessment as it varies greatly between disciplines and stages of study. It may help to think about authentic assessment as an ‘umbrella term for several important pedagogical strategies that seek to immerse learners in environments where they can gain highly practical, lifelong learning skills…’ (Adams Becker et al. 2018).

Authentic assessment is the idea of using creative learning experiences to test students’ skills and knowledge in realistic situations. Authentic assessment measures students’ success in a way that’s relevant to the skills required of them once they’ve finished your course or degree program. In this guidance, we’ll discuss the benefits and challenges of this type of assessment and how you can incorporate authentic assessment in your online course.

Authentic assessment encourages:

* Students to be responsible for their own learning
* Interpretation, performance and collaboration
* Use of higher order cognition skills (see [Blooms’ Taxonomy](https://bloomstaxonomy.net/))
* Utilise various alternative formats
* Use of both formative and summative tasks
* A focus on learning and competence development (Gulikers et al. 2004).

**2. Why use authentic assessment?**

While we can predict some attributes, knowledge and skills that students will need in their future work life there are others that are unknown (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). As a higher education institution, we need to help students to be lifelong learners – one of the important tenets of the CCCU Learning & Teaching Strategy. An important benefit of using authentic assessment is the opportunity for students to learn soft skills and capabilities, often known as the twenty-first-century skills, which include:

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| --- | --- |
| Ways of thinking | * Creativity and innovation
* Critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making
* Learning to learn, metacognition
 |
| Ways of working | * Communication
* Collaboration (teamwork)
 |
| Tools for working | * Information literacy
* ICT literacy
* Ability to conduct research
* Ability to apply approaches
* Ability to map constructs
 |
| Living in the world | * Citizenship – local and global
* Life and career
* Personal and social responsibility – including cultural awareness and competence (Binkley et al. 2012)
 |

Adapted from Boud & Falchikov (2006)

**3. How do I apply authentic assessment?**

The concept of authentic assessment is not new. In 1998 Wiggins outlined some key criteria for defining authentic assessment. These are adapted below with advice on application and examples of possible assessments:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Defining characteristic (as outlined by Wiggins, 1998)** | **Application** | **Possible example** |
| Assessment is realistic and reflects experiences students are likely to face in work/life/further study. | Traditional assessments such as tests or essays may not seem relevant to students as they cannot see how these prepare them for life after university. | Role-playing scenariosPresentations that require timekeeping and ability to answer questions about a project |
| Assessment requires students to make judgement and innovate. | Give students the opportunity to make choices or create opportunities rather than simply gather data or complete a task requiring memorised information. Provide exemplars of how to evaluate a product/activity and assess it for success.  | Critique a scenarioLook at results and suggest alternatives.Give examples of a product/ performance etc. that haven’t performed well. Ask students what they think about why this didn’t work and what they would do to improve this. E.g., a play that closed after a week, a product that was unsuccessful. |
| It asks the student to “do” the subject. | Essentially you move beyond academic knowledge of a subject to application of that knowledge. E.g., in an Economics class you might ask students to consider what factors might affect the price of a good – weather, war, fall in demand etc as practice for modelling or marketing. | Collect relevant real world data from research – academic sources but also commodity markets, professional websites etc. Assessed seminar or group presentation to present results of critique of scenarios. |
| It replicates or simulates the contexts in which people are “tested” in the workplace, in civic life, and in personal life. | The more practical a subject the greater the need for students to put knowledge into practice. However, even in more academic disciplines students still need to be able to communicate their thoughts, analysis and ideas to others. A student may be brilliant at maths but if he/she is unable to communicate the findings then it can never be used effectively.Assessment needs to equip students with the tools and skills needed to communicate effectively in a range of contexts. | Present data in charts.Take part in individual and group presentations. Explain ideas/findings clearly in plain English.E.g., in nursing – apply memorised information about medicines/procedures to complete a simulation treating a patient. In computing: showing how to retrieve lost files, fix broken code or repair damage caused by a virus |
| It assesses the student’s ability to efficiently and effectively use a repertoire of knowledge and skill to negotiate a complex task. | Throughout work, study and life we accumulate knowledge, experience and information. However, it is essential that you can apply these to complete tasks. A dance student may learn many moves, practice many dance and learn about different influences but they need to be able to put together a polished performance for an audience. A nurse will learn many procedures but has to be able to use them accurately and effectively when treating a patient.  | For a professional discipline do a mock e.g., OFSTED inspection for students in education.Role-play various scenarios which call on recall and application of learned knowledge to solve problems, come up with creative solutions etc.  |
| It allows appropriate opportunities to rehearse, practice, consult resources, and get feedback on and refine performances and products. | There are many ways in which you can help students have these opportunities. Examples include:* Making recordings of e.g., performances, lab work, teaching practice, presentations, etc. so that students can play back to identify strengths and weaknesses. Students can do this on their own devices so that have easy access and control over recordings.
* Students review feedback from previous module to see what they can improve on in the next.
* Reflective journals where students can keep a running account of what is going well/needs work.
* Provide a bank of resources and ask students to add good examples that they find to share with others so that there is a solid set of resources e.g., on Blackboard.
 | Classroom observation followed up by reflection and peer feedback in order to improve performanceField trips where taught skills are utilised e.g., an archaeological dig where methods of digging, protecting the site, logging finds etc are recorded and performance can be assessed. Lab based experiments where students try a new approach, design their own experiment and assess its success. |

Adapted from Wiggins (1998)

For more specific subject based examples in the table below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Subject area** | **Authentic Assessment** |
| **Education** | Create a classroom management plan and/or lesson plan for the student’s subject matter and/or intended audience. |
| **Nursing** | Use data to create a hypothetical patient’s health and plan and show the steps for implementing that patient’s care. |
| **Business** | Develop a business plan for a company in the student’s chosen area, e.g., marketing. |
| **Computer Science** | Identify reasons for why a piece of code has become faulty or create a webpage or application. |
| **Policing** | Act as internal consultants to turn around a tarnished constabulary’s reputation and present findings in a group presentation or report. (Leishmann & Fox, 2010) |
| **Sport & Exercise Science** | Create a case study by recording and analyzing a ‘client’s’ (e.g., a peer/friend) diet and design a nutrition and/or exercise plan. |
| **Drama/Performing Arts** | Choreograph a dance based on traditional/folk motifs to demonstrate ability to interpret, apply and critique.  |

**4. How do I plan for authentic assessment?**

An active learning and student-centred approach to teaching and learning highlights the need for authentic assessment, which in turn is linked to course learning outcomes and authentic learning activities and resources.

Think about authentic assessment as a continuum of different task types, primarily undertaken in a university-based context at one end and leading to primarily workplace-based on the other end. The table below lists some examples of authentic assessment types on a continuum, that involve low to high activity, such as progressing from an multiple choice test, to students as partners in learning style negotiated assessment, problem-based tasks or case studies. Take into consideration what year of their course your students are in, the discipline threshold concepts, and the mapping of assessment tasks across the relevant course or module.

Some examples of authentic assessment types across a continuum of activity NB OSCE = Objective structured clinical examination & MCQ = Multiple Choice Questions



 University of Queensland (2021)

Checklist of practical things to consider when designing an authentic assessment:

* In many discipline areas, it may be appropriate to have a combination of traditional and authentic assessment tasks. Don’t feel that all assessments have to be authentic. What is most important is how the learning outcomes are being met.
* If time, or other factors, prevent you from redesigning all your assessments, move incrementally towards more authentic assessment by changing one task and/or context at a time or an aspect of a task or context.
* Tasks are more likely to be authentic when they are designed with colleagues including those from other disciplines. Don’t feel you have to do everything on your own.
* You also do not have to ‘reinvent the wheel’. Find out what your colleagues (both within your department and across CCCU) have already done and consider ways of adapting or modifying existing approaches/materials/tasks e.g., see [PRISM](https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/prism/) & [LTE Resources for Academics](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-enhancement/resources-for-academics/resources-for-academics.aspx):
* Focus on devising a task that immerses students in a realistic ‘project’. Ensure that they have time for planning, gathering the necessary information, consulting with others, revising and peer/self-assessing.
* Ensure that students are clear about both the processes and outcomes expected of them in authentic assessment. Involving students in the development of criteria can be an effective way of ensuring this. Check out the work done with [Students as Partners in Learning](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CChloe%5CDownloads%5CStudents%20as%20partners%20in%20learning%20and%20research%20%E2%80%93%20what%20does%20that%20mean%3F%20%7C%20Politics%20%28canterbury.ac.uk%29) in the University and at the Students as Partners in Learning Conferences which take place each January.
* Explore the possibilities offered by simulation technology for enacting authentic assessment. Small, incremental developments can be pursued successfully in this area. There have been many excellent examples of simulation used on courses at CCCU. You can see examples on [PRISM (canterbury.ac.uk)](https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/prism/)

(adapted from Plymouth University (n.d.)

**5. How do I design an authentic assessment?**

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| --- |
| Things to consider when designing authentic assessment |
| The task: ***What do you have to do?*** | Students complete activities that reflect what is done in a professional context |
| physical context: ***Where do you have to do it?*** | Work contexts can vary greatly from higher education learning environments so assessment should try to mirror skills, knowledge, attitudes and approaches used in actual employer contexts. |
| Social context: ***With whom do you have to do it?*** | Tasks should involve social processes equivalent to real-life situations. These could include teamwork, pair work, peer feedback or other collaboration depending on the characteristics demanded in the real (rather than academic) context |
| Assessment result or form: ***What has to*** ***come out of it?*** ***What are the desired results?*** | Involve a product/performance/end result, demonstration of competencies, array of tasks, oral or written presentation  |
| Criteria and standards: ***How will what you have done be evaluated or judged?***  | Ensure that students are aware of what they have to do to succeed through transparent use of the marking rubrics and learning outcomes. |

Adapted from Guilikers et al. (2004)

To build on these ideas and develop your own authentic assessments:

* Discuss ideas with colleagues from your discipline and industry
* Reflect on the suitability of existing examples of authentic assessment for your course
* Speak to your subject librarian, learning developer and employability and skills manager.
* Investigate resources such as the [CCCU Prism blogs](https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/prism/) or the Further Resources listed below.

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1. **Further resources:**

Really good repository of examples of authentic assessment tasks: [UQ Assessment Ideas Factory – A database of innovative assessment techniques to promote student engagement and encourage academic integrity](http://www.uq.edu.au/teach/uqassess/)

Detailed set of resources that are a good starting point: [Authentic Assessment - The PL Toolbox](https://www.thepltoolbox.com/authenticassessment.html)