

Enhancing Student Assessment

What the University Leadership
Can Do?

What are the basic problems of student assessment? A reminder

- A. Problems to do with the nature of assessment being carried out.
- B. Students' rights for feedback is almost completely ignored.
- C. Examinations are carried out in a non humane physical and social environment

The nature of assessment (1)

- Written examinations: mostly essay type, unspecified rules, testing for recall, no role for the co-examiner.
- Other forms of assessment of student achievement are not practiced as should be.
- Oral examinations are without standards.

The nature of assessment (2)

- Student assignments are not counted in most courses.
- No role for the examination committee of the Department.
- No intervention from the administration to ensure quality.

The nature of assessment (3)

Assessment and outcomes

- Examinations are not outcomes driven, if there is any written outcomes!!!
- The other types of outcomes are not measured: Student characteristics: ways of thinking, communications skills, etc....

Students' rights for feedback

- Only to check for material error, and the student has to pay for it.
- Denies feedback necessary for learning.
- Encourages faculty negligence and malpractice in many ways

Social and physical context of assessment

1. Examinations are carried out in non humane physical environments, tents, corridors, suffocating rooms.
2. Invigilators are untrained, sometimes unfriendly, some other times very very lenient.

What the Department chairpersons can do?(1)

- Insisting on a syllabus and a course file for each course.
- Establish a monitoring mechanism for checking, (possible mechanism: a Committee for documentation of the Learning process).
- Reactivating the role of the co-examiner (e.g. by blind re-marking).
- Regular checking of examination contents to guarantee covering of the syllabus and measuring different types of outcomes.

What the Departments chairpersons can do? (2)

- Promote a culture rejecting plagiarism: through including information on what is considered plagiarism within some of the early courses, Including Teaching of ethics of study and research as part of the programs, training faculty in spotting plagiarism etc...
- Allow students the right to examine their answers and discuss it with faculty and assistants (when the numbers is the problem).

What the Faculty administration can do?

- Allowing for assessment methods other than written exams as much as possible.
- This will be possible in postgraduate programs, Undergraduate programs with limited number of students and/or higher numbers of faculty available.
- This also might need some changes in the rules and regulations redefining faculty work load in terms wider than the present teaching hours system.

What the Faculty administration can do? (2)

- Establish an examiners committee to monitor the compliance with the "Student Assessment Code of Practice".
- Look into methods of standardization of oral, practical, and clinical assessments and enforce standards of good practice and seek changes of rules and regulations as necessary.
- Allow for students complaints mechanism to the Examiners committees.

What the Faculty administration can do? (3)

- Reconsider the participation of faculty in assessment and suggest possible changes in the regulations governing work loads to give more time to assessment if possible.
- Provide training for invigilators on the rules and regulations of the examinations and establish a monitoring system to follow compliance.

What the University leadership can do? (1)

Establish an assessment and evaluation center with the following tasks:

- Help develop and implement standards of good practice in the assessment domain.
- Initiate training for faculty on modern methods for student assessment.
- Encourage ideas and experimentation in new methods of assessment that can fit with the assessment environment.
- Contains a University wide unit for assessing other types of outcomes common to the University : e.g. critical thinking skills, communication skills etc..... This should be on entry and on exit.

What the University leadership can do? (2)

- Look for more funding to deal with the problems of the physical environment.
- Reconsiders the roles and regulations present in assessment and seek necessary changes to comply with good practice.

These are minimal changes, needs very little more funding, with huge impact on the quality of student assessment practices.