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ADB

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC : DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CHAMPIONS
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SESSION FOURTEEN: ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

Lye Lin Heng

National University of Singapore



LEARNING OUTCOMES – SESSION 14

Session Topic

- Understanding how assessment supports the learning objectives of an environmental law course
- Appreciating the range of assessment options available when teaching an environmental law course

Teaching Methodology

- Understanding how to make use of self-directed discussion to enable students to develop insights through interactive discussion

Assessment options:

- Prescriptive v consultative assessment schemes
- Oral v written assessment
- Examination v written assignment (including nature of examination (e.g., take home?))
- Class presentations (individual v group assessment)
- Problem-based v essay-style questions v multiple choice questions
- Self-assessment v peer-assessment



SETTING AN ASSESSMENT SCHEME

Prescriptive v consultative approaches

- It is common for assessment schemes to be prescribed by the teacher in the course outline
- An alternative approach is to **consult** at the beginning of the course with students in order to explain the proposed assessment scheme and receive their feed-back
- Consultative approaches have several benefits:
 - Students can advise if deadlines for assessment tasks coincide with those in other courses (of which the teacher may be unaware) and seek to explore alternative deadlines;
 - The weighting of various assessment components may also be discussed with the class and adjusted in response to views expressed ;
 - Student engagement with the course and its assessment scheme is enhanced at the outset.

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT METHODS

- Examinations
 - Normally based on either hypothetical problem-solving questions or essay topics;
 - May be “closed book” or, more commonly, “open book” (where students may bring materials with them, e.g., lecture notes, other materials they have prepared, or even text-books/laptops with internet access)
 - Additional modes of examination include multiple choice questions (not common in legal education) and a formal oral examination (usually only at postgraduate level)
- Research papers
 - Well-suited to environmental law
 - Combination of examination and research paper can be a 24-hour “take home” examination requiring students to research and present a paper over the course of a 24 hour period

OTHER ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Strong expectations now come from both Universities and students that “continuous” assessment will be offered at various stages throughout a course – not simply a single (traditional) assessment exercise at the conclusion of the course
- This can be achieved through other forms of assessment during a course, in relation to :
 - Oral presentations (individual or in small groups);
 - Periodic quizzes;
 - Engagement in activities such as a role-play or moot;
 - Preparation of legal briefs (often associated with an environmental law clinic programme)
 - Other creative activities (e.g., preparation of a 3 minute video on a local environmental issue – Prof. Bob Percival at Maryland Law School, USA)
- May also award a mark to each student for class participation (i.e., contribution to class discussions, either structured or free-form) at the end of a course

OPTIONS FOR DETERMINATION OF STUDENT MARKS

- Ultimately, assessment must be directed to the teacher's judgment on the individual performance of each student in the class
- But other modes of determining a student's final mark may be employed during the course, for example:
 - Group marks for presentations by small-groups (each member of the group shares the group mark for that component of the assessment scheme)
 - Peer-review based marks (where students determine mark for each other's performance – often a group-based mark)
 - Self-evaluation (student allocates a mark to themselves for a particular exercise)

TEACHING METHODOLOGY EXERCISE

- Participants to be divided into three groups to discuss their preferences for assessment options;
- Free-form, self-directed discussion (45 minutes)re:
 - types of assessment you have used in the past;
 - Whether any forms of assessment described in this presentation, and which you have not previously used, are of interest and might be tried in the future by you?
- Report-back by three groups and final comments by trainers