

***STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN THE
ASIA-PACIFIC : DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW
CHAMPIONS***

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SESSION 14: THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

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The Role of Assessment

- To determine whether students are meeting course expectations in terms of knowledge and application
- To provide feedback
- To evaluate progress
- To improve course and teaching
 - Linking learning to assessment
- To rank students
- To meet accreditation requirements

Definition of Assessment

- “the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing interpreting and using information to increase students’ learning and development of skills”
- To do this, we need to go beyond the traditional assessment forms of examinations and essays
 - Preparation of legal briefs
 - Moot courts and mediations
 - Assessment of participation in class:
 - role plays, brainstorming, student presentations

Linking learning to assessment

- Assessment is most effective when the form of assessment is linked to the style of teaching and learning
- This depends on:
 - The knowledge you want students to absorb:
 - Legal knowledge
 - Contextual knowledge
 - The skills you want students to develop:
 - writing skills, oral skills, critical thinking skills

Assessment criteria

- Lecturers should give students a copy of their assessment criteria so that students know what to expect.

Assessment types

- The type of assessment will affect the relevance of each factor. For example, the amount and type of research required will vary between a research essay, which will require independent research beyond the prescribed materials, and a problem question which may only require appropriate analysis of the prescribed materials.



Fail (Below 50%)

Work may fail for any or all of the following reasons:

- Does not answer the question.
- Contains significant or numerous errors.
- Few or no identifiable arguments.
- Content that is inappropriate or irrelevant.
- Lack of research or analysis.
- Difficult or impossible to understand through poor grammar, expression or structure.
- Overall, does not demonstrate the minimum level
- of competence in the assessment.



Pass (50-64%)

- Work receiving a pass grade will generally exhibit the following characteristics:
- Identifies the key issues, but does not follow through with a reasoned argument.
- Contains some significant errors.
- Displays satisfactory engagement with the key issues.
- Offers descriptive summary of material relevant to the question.
- Superficial use of material, and may display a tendency to paraphrase.
- Demonstrates little evidence of in-depth research or analysis.
- Adequate expression.
- Overall, demonstrates the minimum level of competence in the assessment and satisfies the requirements to proceed to higher-level studies in the degree or subject area.



Credit (65-74%)

- Work receiving a credit grade will generally exhibit the following characteristics:
- Covers main issues fairly well in answering the question.
- Contains no significant errors
- Demonstrates an attempted critical approach to the issues.
- Demonstrates reasonably sound research and analysis in addressing the key issues.
- Has a clear structure and reasonably clear expression.



Distinction (75-84%)

- Work receiving a distinction grade will generally exhibit the following characteristics:
- Completely answers the question.
- Achieves a critical and evaluative approach to the issues.
- Content and structure is well organised in support of the argument.
- Demonstrates extensive research and analysis to support a well-documented argument.
- Generally well expressed and free from errors.
- Has a clear structure and is well articulated.



High Distinction (85% +)

- Work receiving a high distinction grade will generally exhibit the following characteristics:
- Completely answers the question.
- Contains striking originality of approach or analysis.
- Demonstrates exhaustive or innovative research (where independent research required).
- Exceptionally well written, structured and expressed.
- Is otherwise exceptional in some way.



- **Example of assessment sheet for research essay**



Constructive feedback

- Constructive feedback means to give *positive* responses to student efforts rather than destructive or *negative* feedback to them, in writing or orally.
- Constructive feedback differs from criticism by describing what took place and what did not take place in terms of goals.
- Through constructive feedback, basic mistakes and misinterpretations are corrected, in order to encourage students to study the subject more intensively and enthusiastically



Summative vs. formative feedback

- **Summative** feedback tells students how they have performed upon reaching an end point, such as the end of a class or course, e.g.

- Exams
- Class presentations
- research essays
- final projects



Summative vs. formative feedback

- **Formative** feedback tells students what they are doing right and what they need to improve before the end point is reached.
- Formative feedback can appear to be more informal than summative feedback. However, formative feedback should be very structured, because it must be based on the assignment goals.

Constructive feedback in writing

- Constructive feedback in writing is structured within the assignment's goals.

Module 1: Climate Change Science in the Face of Uncertainty Discussion

- For example, a rubric can be used to embed feedback to each student within each specific goal.

Category	60%	80%	100%	Points
Initial post - organization (10 points)	Does not provide sufficient organizational structure to lay out an argument or identify key information relevant to the assignment.	Organization is sufficient to understand main thrust of author's argument, but requires some effort on part of reader.	Organizational structure effectively lays out the argument. <i>Clear organization of thoughts.</i>	10
Initial post - word count (10 points)	Does not meet word count requirements.	Falls slightly outside word count requirements. <i>The first post was shy of the minimum and would have benefitted from more explanation.</i>	Meets word count requirements.	8
Substantive discussion - content (20 points)	Fails to fully address previous post or misinterprets the information relayed in a post.	Addresses a previous post but does not contribute additional substantive information or discussion-provoking questions.	Appropriately understands, addresses, and synthesizes a previous post , and adds to the discussion in a substantive way. <i>Excellent. You consistently read posts carefully and replied thoughtfully. Your replies show understanding of the material and your colleagues' use of it. You added to the discussion, both in terms of Qs posed, ideas offered, and references supplied or analyzed.</i>	20
Use of resources (10 points)	Does not sufficiently analyze assigned reading or other materials.	Draws on some assigned or outside materials but relies largely on personal opinion or conjecture.	Appropriately cites, analyzes, and discusses assigned readings or other materials in a way that furthers group discussion. <i>Solid use and citation of both required and supplementary materials.</i>	10
Style (10 points)	Significant problems with grammar and spelling.	Minor grammatical and spelling errors.	Exceptional clarity and use of grammar. Posts are written clearly and concisely. <i>Very good.</i>	10
Scientific concepts	Weak or incorrect use of scientific concepts to make policy-	Acceptable and appropriate use of scientific concepts to make	Strong and appropriate use of scientific concepts to support	16

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SOME INNOVATIONS IN ASSESSMENT
IN LEGAL EDUCATION



Produced by Suzanne Owen and Gary Davis

- Some further reading
- [http://www.cald.asn.au/assets/lists/Education/Some%20Innovations%20in%20Assessment%20in%20Legal%20Education%20altc Davis Owen report comb\[1\].pdf](http://www.cald.asn.au/assets/lists/Education/Some%20Innovations%20in%20Assessment%20in%20Legal%20Education%20altc%20Davis%20Owen%20report%20combined%201].pdf)
- (2009)