

**STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
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SESSION 17: THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

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The Role of Assessment

- To determine whether students understand the materials, are able to think critically about the issues, and apply what they have learnt.
- To provide feedback
- To evaluate progress
- To improve course content 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”
- Many methods of assessment
- Essays, assignments – weightage?
- Class performance – weightage?
- Examinations differ – length, type of questions, weightage, open book / closed book, etc.
- Each method is aimed at achieving a certain objective :
 - Q – What is it that you wish to impart/convey to the student?
 - Q – How best should this be taught
 - Q - How best can you assess that the student has learnt what you have tried to teach?

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
 - Other skills – presentation skills, using power point etc.

- We need to go beyond the traditional assessment forms of examinations and essays.
- Other forms of assessment include :
 - Preparation of legal briefs
 - Assessment of participation in class:
 - role plays, brainstorming, student presentations
 - Group work & reports (testing ability to work as a team)
 - Site visits & reports
 - Moot courts and mediation exercises



Assessment criteria

- Teachers should inform students at the start, how they will be assessed.
- Class performance should be given some weightage – ensures student attendance
- Written examinations – length, format, what can be brought into examination eg statutes, cases, all materials?
- Essays – Q - “Open book, closed mouth” assignments
- Q cheating? Plagiarism?
- Oral presentations
- Group work
- Q - Should teachers should give students a copy of their assessment criteria so that students know what to expect.

Example of criteria for a fail

Does not answer the question. Work may fail for any or all of the following reasons:

- Failure to identify the issues
- Failure to apply the right arguments, cases
- No original research.
- Content that is inappropriate or irrelevant because the student has not attempted to answer the question.
- Plagiarism, inappropriate use of other student work, including 'recycling' all or a significant part of a paper which has already been given credit in another course.
- Difficult or impossible to understand through poor grammar, expression or structure.
- Significant or numerous errors.

Q – Foreign students – lack of facility with language.



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.
- 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.

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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_Davis_Owen_report_comb[1].pdf)
- (2009)
- See page 11