

# Designing assessment

I am working with a program team at the moment to design assessment.

Sitting with the units or courses beside us so we have an overall perspective, the first thing we are doing is looking at assessment across the whole of the qualification. What do we want for our graduates? This might, in part, be encapsulated in graduate outcomes. Otherwise we will profile our graduates' broad capabilities and attributes.

Then we start playing around with possible assessment across the whole qualification.

- When does assessment take place? Can we identify assessment points?
- How can we spread the assessments to be fair to students?
- Is there a way to link assessments across the whole qualification or semesters, for example using the same context or project in one unit/course to assess a related capability in another.
- Does the assessment across the qualification reflect the increasingly more complex capabilities being developed in the students?
- Does the sequencing of assessment gradually allow for greater student participation in its design as they become increasingly independent in their learning from first year through to final year?
- Can they design the final assessment, perhaps a capstone or a major project, for themselves?
- Are there opportunities for holistic assessment or co-assessment across units/courses?

Out of this process we will have a tentative map of the assessment for the whole qualification.

When designing the individual assessment tasks we focus on how the students will demonstrate achievement of the unit/course outcomes. What evidence would satisfy us?

The assessment criteria for each assessment task are therefore derived from these outcomes. Sometimes there are graduate attributes or graduate outcomes to take into account as well. Assessment is an integral part of the curriculum design process and not something which is tacked on at the end. In fact, once you have outcomes, move to designing the assessment first. Then design the learning processes and activities that will enable students to be successful.

In designing assessment, we aim to align:

- unit outcomes
- graduate outcomes
- assessment tasks
- assessment criteria, and
- learning activities.

The process of designing the assessment can be a means of validating the unit outcomes. If assessment designers have difficulty developing valid assessment tasks, then it may mean going back to the unit outcomes and reviewing them.

There are some variations to the alignment and the process for competency-based assessment, but that's the stuff of another blog.