**Inclusive Assessment Conference at Plymouth University**

**Inclusive international assessment: Sally Brown, Independent consultant and Visiting Professor at Plymouth University.** [**http://sally-brown.net/**](http://sally-brown.net/)

**Some questions on perspectives on assessment** (adapted from Brown. S. Chapter 1 of Assessment, learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Global Perspectives, Palgrave, 2015)

|  | **Would you as a lecturer/academic tutor:** | Of course, without hesitation what's the problem? | It depends. Possibly. | Under no circumstances. It would be completely inappropriate | Comments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Encourage your students to pose opposing views to your own in their essays? |  |  |  | Would your response be the same in relation to seminars, lectures, tutorials, private conversations? |
| 2 | Meet up with your students in a bar after classes to discuss assignments? |  |  |  | If you said no, is the issue meeting outside class, or is it the location? (a place where alcohol is served?) |
| 3 | Provide detailed feedback and advice on draft assignments? |  |  |  | Does this depend upon the stage within the programme? In some countries very detailed feedback on drafts is an expectation at all levels. |
| 4 | Routinely spend an hour with your students after a lecture discussing queries? |  |  |  | In some cultures academics are timetabled for at least an hour after lectures to clarify issues. In others, it’s normal to speed from one lecture to another. |
| 5 | Ask your students to call you by your first name in assessment discussions? |  |  |  | Whether you do or not will depend on cultural *mores* and the power distinction between academics and students.  |
| 6 | Require your students to participate in assignments where they are assessed as members of a group? |  |  |  | In some nations this is uncommon or indeed frowned on.  |
| 7 | Allow your students to negotiate the final mark you are awarding them? |  |  |  | Might it be possible for students to convince you that they deserved a higher mark? Or is this completely out of the question? |
| 8 | Timetable exams on Friday afternoons, Saturdays or Sundays? |  |  |  | This might be problematic for students with devout religious convictions. |
| 9 | Use computer–based tests for final assignments? |  |  |  | In many nations this is customary. Would your response depend on the types of questions used? or the subject material |
| 10. | Examine your undergraduate students by live oral exams/ vivas? |  |  |  | Vivas are often used for undergrads in Northern Europe but rarely so in the UK. |
| 11 | Require (or allow) your students to negotiate the criteria on which they are being assessed? |  |  |  | This is permitted/ encouraged for example in some nations e.g. Australia and New Zealand |
| 12 | Make copies of previous years’ question papers available to all students electronically or as hard copy in the library? |  |  |  | This is common in many but not all nations, since the question banks in some nations vary very little |
| 13 | Use an assessment management system across the university for alignment of assignments to learning outcomes, submission and return of work, recording and presentation to exam boards of marks? |  |  |  | This is increasingly common in the US and some western nations |
| 14 | Train all those who will be assessing students in methods, approaches and assurance of standards for assessment? |  |  |  | This is an expectation in some nations (e.g QAA Code B6 on assessment in the UK). |
| 15 | Allow your students to bring firearms into the examination hall? |  |  |  | Permitted in some states in the US |
| 16. | Ask your students to take examinations in the open air? |  |  |  | This is common in some states where clement weather can be relied upon |
| 17. | Set examinations with a duration of 9 hours? |  |  |  | This is not uncommon in Norway, but in some nations the norm is one hour, so students are sometimes surprised when first encountering longer exams |
| 18. | Allow the extended family to come along to witness assessed activities? |  |  |  | This would not be uncommon in Maori settings in New Zealand, and PhD defences in the Netherlands are public events |
| 19. | Forbid your students from sitting exams in Wellington boots or with excessively long hair/ clothes of the opposite gender? |  |  |  | The former was forbidden at an Agricultural college in new Zealand and the latter historically in Singapore |
| 20. | Include making eye contact as a criteria in face-to-face presentations? |  |  |  | In many contexts, looking strangers in the eye is considered rude, aggressive or unacceptable. |

**Shared languages for learning**

Even when people from nations who share a language (English or Spanish for example) discuss pedagogy, it is not always the case that the words they use mean the same things to them both.

**Assessment and evaluation**: in the UK, assessment means the marking and grading of student work and evaluation means the commentaries and the ratings and feedback about teaching given by students, for example, through course evaluations of the National Student Survey. In the US it is usually the other way round. This can cause confusion, for example, when I invited an expert on classroom assessment from the US to speak at a UK Assessment conference! In Australia and New Zealand the way they use the terms tends to depend to some extent on which side of the Atlantic they use as their principal resource-base in my experience.

**Compensation** in the UK implies the regulatory framework through which students who for reasons of illness or due to other causes miss or fail assignments and can remediate the problem by undertaking re-sit examinations, alternative tasks, or in rarer occasions when their overall work can be deemed to have demonstrate that they have achieved a standard of work overall that merits the award, being given an aegrotat (from the Latin s/he is ill) meaning an award may be given without further work if the student is deemed likely to have otherwise passed exams if not incapacitated. In at least one nation to my knowledge, compensation alternately means the legitimate process by which students pay extra to progress from one level to another without passing the assessments, in recognition of the extra work teachers will need to do to bring them up to the required standard.

**Faculty/staff/administration**: ‘Faculty’ in the UK is an organisational term to describe groups of subjects or departments, for example, The Faculty of Arts and Humanities, but in the US the term means academic teachers. The term ‘instructor’ is widely used in the US for staff who teach undergraduate students, but would not be used for academics in the UK, but could perhaps be used to describe technicians who provide technical instruction. A Professor in the UK is a status only reached after extensive application processes, but the title ‘Professor’ is given to all senior academics in some nations. University *staff* in the UK tends to mean everyone employed by the university, but in the US it applies to what in the UK we would term administrators who support the roles of teachers through professional and clerical services (while those termed Administrators in the US would normally be called Senior Managers in the UK!).

**Rubric**: In various nations this can mean the text in italic at the beginning of an exam paper which indicates what the student should do (e.g. answer four questions from six) or text including banks of statements which can be used to give feedback to students electronically in formats which are also confusingly sometimes called Rubrics.

**References and further reading**

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