

Assessing Experiential Learning Perspectives and Case Examples from Elsewhere



Cases and examples

Case studies in Architecture, English literature, and Journalism (UK)

This paper presents three case studies in Architecture, English literature and Journalism respectively to illustrate different forms of experiential learning. Each case study was closely linked to the professional knowledge and skills needed in that particular discipline. Students were required to go outside of the academic environment and work closely with people in the wider community. An important component in the assessment used in all of the three cases was critical reflection, which took various forms such as reflective journals and critical evaluation of one's own work.

Udall, J., Forrest, D., & Stewart, K. (2015). Locating and building knowledge outside of the academy: Approaches to engaged teaching at the University of Sheffield. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(2), 158-170.

A framework for collaborative assessment in Law (Australia)

This paper introduces a collaborative assessment framework for work integrated learning. The key assessment component is a portfolio that includes the report of the workplace supervisor, the students' articulation as to their acquired competence, and supporting evidence of the competence provided by the academic supervisor. This collaborative model was adopted in assessing internship in an undergraduate law course. It was found that a majority of the students valued this form of assessment.

McNamara, J. (2013). The challenge of assessing professional competence in work integrated learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(2), 183-197.

Assessing graduate qualities in a Commerce internship (Australia)

An internship programme was designed to develop graduate qualities (e.g., being innovative and flexible, informed and connected) for students in Faculty of Commerce at the University of Wollongong. Students spent a certain period of time in host organisations where they needed to face and handle day-to-day business challenges. Students were assessed through e-logs, learning modules, and reflective journals. E-logs provided students with opportunities to document daily activities and thoughts. Learning modules focused on generic skills development, which required students to go through case studies and respond to questions. One requirement of the reflective

journals was that students should review how they had developed the graduate qualities as an outcome through the internship placement.

Clements, M. D., & Cord, B. A. (2013). Assessment guiding learning: developing graduate qualities in an experiential learning programme. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(1), 114-124.

Training in interpersonal communication in Medicine and Health (Finland)

The paper presents a model for designing and implementing interpersonal communication training. Three experiential learning methods – simulated patients, role-play, and theatre in education – are compared and all seem equally suitable for second-year medical students, and can be used in other disciplines. The communication training models include students' active observation of simulated doctor-patient interaction, their reflections about the interaction, practising communication skills in a doctor's role, as well as debriefing and feedback discussions. Generally, integrating communication training with an actual health care visit can help medical students to appreciate communication skills at an early stage of their studies.

Koponen, J., Pyörälä, E., & Isotalus, P. (2014). Communication skills for medical students: Results from three experiential methods. *Simulation & Gaming*, 45(2), 235-254.

Assessing a Public Policy internship holistically (Australia)

This article reports a holistic assessment approach in a Policy Internship Programme at Deakin University, which involved three key elements: preparation, collaboration, and reflection. Preparation referred to the development of students' assessment skills through providing them with opportunities to evaluate different aspects of a policy document. Collaboration was a process during which students negotiated a research contract with workplace and academic supervisors. In the contract, goals, objectives, criteria for assessment and action plans should be specified. Regarding the reflection, students were required to analyse their experiences and draw implications within a broader frame of public policy. Integrated in their workplace experiences, this assessment approach facilitated students' learning of disciplinary knowledge as well as learning from assessment.

O'Toole, K. (2007). Assessment in experiential learning: The case of a public policy internship. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 34(2), 51-62.

Fostering critical reflection of everyday environment through the use of autoethnography (UK)

In the course Advertising and Consumer Culture, third-year students were engaged with the taught theory through experience; the assignment could be either an academic essay or an autoethnographic essay. Students met at a shopping centre where they were given 'estrangement' tasks related to the module content. They shared and discussed their experiences during debriefing, and made connections to theory. Many themes emerged from the written assignment, and the teacher gave informal feedback to help students extend their perspectives. The benefits and limitations of autoethnographic assignment are discussed.

Keenan, J., & Evans, A. (2014). 'I am a Starbucks worker ... my life no longer belongs to me': The performance of estrangement as a learning tool. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(2), 101-112.

Experiential learning through undergraduate research experiences (Australia)

This paper reveals five different models of designing and implementing undergraduate research experiences: apprenticeship, industry project, inquiry project, methods course, and mixed model. Typically students are engaged in researching literature to develop their research projects and professional practices, analysing data or evidence relevant to their discipline, or working on a research question based on a current problem in research or industry. For example, law students extract evidence of relevant legal precedent to form a convincing oral argument while science students perform quantitative data analysis essential for graduates entering the profession. Assessment tasks for each model are identified, including critical literature research, journal article, portfolios, oral presentation, and policy recommendations.

Zimbardi, K., & Myatt P. (2014). Embedding undergraduate research experiences within the curriculum: A cross-disciplinary study of the key characteristics guiding implementation. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(2), 233-250.

Issues and recommendations

Burning questions in assessing experiential education (US)

This article posts a number of essential questions regarding assessing experiential education, for example, why we are doing assessment and what we are assessing. It argues that it would be necessary to engage faculty, staff, students, site personnel, and community members in answering these questions together. Assessment of experiential learning should therefore extend beyond

documenting learning to engage faculty members in identifying and designing approaches that can address their questions and puzzles (or so called 'burning questions') about student learning. Among various assessment methods, a learning portfolio, a purposeful collection of a series of student reflections presented in a structured way, was suggested to be the most comprehensive method for assessing experiential learning.

Qualters, D.M. (2010). Bringing the outside in: Assessing experiential education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 124, 55-62.

Designing work-integrated learning assessment (Canada/ Australia)

With explicit references to a number of challenges in assessing work-integrated learning, in particular, the complexity and unpredictability of the learning environments and influential factors, this article emphasises that the assessment must be integrated in practice with a focus on the application of knowledge and theory in a professional context. It is also recommended to have the assessment conducted at different time points: before the experiences for briefing and safety reasons; during the experiences to assess the actual application of knowledge and skills; and post-experiences to encourage reflective practices, self-evaluation, and review.

Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). Assessing work integrated learning. In L. Cooper, J. Orrell, & M. Bowden (Eds.), *Work Integrated Learning: A Guide to Effective Practice* (pp. 99-123). New York: Routledge.

Assessment of Graduate Learning Outcomes in work-based contexts (Australia)

The Assessing and Assuring Graduate Learning Outcomes (AAGLO) Project conducted in Australia has examined issues related to the assessment of Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLOs) in work-based contexts. The Project has recognised a number of challenges in assessing work-based learning, for example, the difficulties in devising assessment tasks appropriate to the unpredictable and often unbounded outcomes in the real-world working context. Recommendations included aspects related to the development of students' knowledge about assessment activities, the enhancement of teachers' and industrial supervisors' assessment capacity, and the provision of timely and responsive evaluation.

Barrie, S., Hughes, C., Crisp, G., & Bennison, A. (2011). *AAGLO Summary 3: Challenges of assessing Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLOs) in work-based contexts*. The University of Sydney [online resource] http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/projects/aaglo/pdf/SP10-1879_FINAL%20sydney%20barrie%20final%20report%20part%201.pdf