

# Assessing Presentations in Common Core Courses

## CASE EXAMPLES FROM ELSEWHERE



### Oral presentations & professionalism (Spain/USA)

Reports two successive trials of paired oral presentations in a senior level industrial engineering course. Students took on dual roles: preparing and delivering their own presentation, and as critical workmates in the same professional organisation when others were presenting to them. The initiative was judged broadly successful in developing students' professional skills in public speaking, 'an activity they mostly dread.'

Berjano, E. et al (2013). Improving professionalism in the engineering curriculum through a novel use of oral presentations. *Europ Jnl Engineering Educ* 32.3, 303-314

### Group learning via presentations (Sweden)

Groups of 4-5 students prepared presentations on assigned problems. Presentations typically took 20 mins and Q&A a further 5-10 mins. Learning opportunities were seen as five-fold, and from: preparing the presentation, presenting the mathematics, listening to others presenting, post-presentation discussion, feedback by the teacher to the presenting group. A thoroughgoing evaluation yielded largely positive findings.

Kågesten, O. & Engelbrecht, J. (2007). Student group presentations: a learning instrument in mathematics for engineering students. *Europ Jnl Engineering Educ* 32.3, 303-314

### Peer-assessed oral presentations (UK)

This study investigated tutor and student peer assessment of oral presentations by year 2 biological and environmental science students from two universities. Having to assess peers seemed to enhance student engagement, and while there was broad agreement between tutor and student markers, the latter's marks were on average 5% higher, except where the students had been involved in developing the assessment criteria. The male students tended to award somewhat lower marks to female presenters, while there was a dip in both student and tutor marks for presentations coming fourth or fifth in a series of seven.

Langan, A.M. et al (2005). Peer assessment of oral presentations: effects of gender, university affiliation & participation in the development of assessment criteria. *Assessm & Eval in Higher Educ* 30.1, 21-34

### Oral presentations and group discussion (Thailand)

Uses conversational analysis to study oral presentations by Business English students in a Thai university, providing evidence of a 'washback' effect that assessed oral presentations can have on collaborative peer learning in the classroom, boosting the quality of students' discussion contributions and responses.

Sundrarajun, C. & Kiley, R. (2010). The oral presentation as a context for learning and assessment. *Innov in Lang Learning & Teaching* 4.2, 101-117

### Contrasting approaches to group projects & presentations (Australia)

A fascinating comparative study of two courses enrolling high numbers of international students, one in Business & Management, the other in Information Technology. Both used group projects and presentations to mirror workplace settings authentically and to enhance students' speaking skills, and in both peer review was used to promote reflection on groupwork skills. However, in the B&M course, the talking requirements were treated as an implicit and relatively self-evident feature of the assessment, while in the IT course, they were more directly introduced, coached and practiced by students prior to being formally assessed. Rather than determining what would constitute 'best practice', the paper reviews the pros and cons of each approach with respect to what practices might be sustainable in given institutional contexts.

Doherty, C. et al (2011). Talking the talk: oracy demands in first-year university assessment tasks. *Assessment in Educ* 18.1, 27-39

### Students' experiences of presenting (Scotland)

Reports the findings of an interview-based study of 39 undergraduate students' experiences of oral presentations. The students concerned were in three contrasting subject areas (physical sciences, social sciences and humanities) in three Scottish universities. Six key sources of influence on the students' experiences are identified: their prior experiences of presenting; tutors' guidance and support on presenting; giving the talk component of the presentation; handling post-talk questions and comments; feedback from tutors on the presentations; and learning from other students' presentations.

Hounsell, D. and McCune, V. (2003) Students' experiences of learning to present. In: Rust, C., ed.. *Improving Student Learning Theory and Practice – Ten Years On*. Proc 10th Internat Sympos on Improving Student Learning, Brussels, 2002. Oxford: CSLD. pp. 109-118

## A programme-wide approach to developing presentation skills (USA)

Distinctive in adopting a programme-wide approach to the progressive development of students' oral presentation skills from sophomore to graduate levels; deploying assessment rubrics which clarify expectations of students and are based on agreed descriptions of competence levels; and monitoring students' performance against the competencies across programmes.

Kerby, D. & Romine, J. (2009) Develop oral presentation skills through accounting curriculum design and course-embedded assessment. *Jnl Educ for Business*, 85: 172–179

## A poster presentation option (UK)

At Anglia Polytechnic University, Year 2 Dipl. in Social Work students in a course in Family & Marital Therapy can opt to give a poster presentation rather than submit a written assignment. Each poster is allocated 15 minutes for Q&A and whole-class discussion, and assessment criteria focus mainly on the extent to which the poster is self-explanatory, helpfully informative and makes appropriate use of theory, as well as the quality of the student's verbal responses in Q&A.

Akister, J. et al. (2000). Poster presentations in social work education assessment: a case study. *Innov in Educ & Training Internat* 37.3, pp. 229-233.

## Mixed reactions to assessing Powerpoints (Norway)

Travel & Tourism students at Lillehammer University College were assessed on the Powerpoint slides from their group presentations. This paper is of particular interest in discussing the mixed reactions to the initiative by staff and students, and in exploring why this form of assessment might be considered valid.

Dobson, S. (2006). The assessment of student PowerPoint presentations – attempting the impossible? *Assessm & Eval in Higher Educ* 31.1, 109-119

## How students view oral presentations (Australia)

A qualitative study of theology students' experiences of oral presentations identified three contrasting conceptions: of oral presentations as the transmission (largely one-way) of ideas; as a test of understanding of what was being studied (in anticipation of audience questioning); and as a position to be argued for persuasively, in engagement with an audience.

Joughin, G. (2007). Student conceptions of oral presentations. *Studies in Higher Educ* 32.3, 323-336

## Postgraduate students' perceptions of oral presentation (UK)

Presents the results of a questionnaire survey of pre-service teacher education students' perceptions of an oral presentation linked to a school-based project. The results were overwhelmingly positive, notwithstanding some anxieties about performing to an audience. The presentation was felt to develop essential workplace skills and helped gain a sense of achievement, while being a listener was a worthwhile experience that offered new ideas as well as insights into different approaches (including multimodal ones) to presenting.

Turner, K. et al (2013). Oral presentation as a form of summative assessment in a master's level PGCE module: the student perspective. *Assessm & Eval in Higher Educ* 38.6, 662-673

## Impromptu presentations (USA)

A practical guide to the use and benefits of impromptu presentations by graduate business students. Within a timetabled class, groups of students are each assigned a task that focuses, for example, on a problem or issue, a case, or research data. The groups first work on their own to complete the task (20-40 mins), then present their response (5-10 mins), followed by Q&A. The authors contend that impromptu presentations promote greater student learning and participation in the classroom as well as improving students' oral speaking skills.

Thompson, K.J. et al (2012) Impromptu presentations: boosting student learning and engagement through spontaneous collaboration. *Jnl Educ for Business*, 87:1, 14-21

## Oral presentations at a distance (UK)

Based on the findings of a HE Academy-funded project, this paper evaluates the effectiveness and wider applicability of assessed audio-recorded oral presentations in an Open University Religious Studies module. It investigates how students perceive the experience of delivering, recording and receiving feedback on a presentation given to a virtual audience in an asynchronous setting; and how tutors views the benefits and challenges of providing effective feedback on such presentations.

Sinclair, S. (2014). Assessing oral presentations in distance and open learning. In: *Challenges for Research into Open & Distance Learning: Doing Things Better – Doing Better Things*. Proc Europ Dist & E-Learning Network 2014 Res Workshop, Oxford, Oct 2014, pp. 203-211.