

## Introduction: Special Issue on Authentic Assessment

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Like many of our instructional endeavors over the past few years, the topic of this special issue arises in part out of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we shifted our instruction in the fall of 2020 to various forms of remote learning—synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, and HyFlex—there was significant concern about academic integrity for exams now being taken online. While many institutions tried to rapidly adopt and scale the use of online proctoring tools, there was a deeper movement to shift us away from the large-scale, objective testing that has been ubiquitous in our on-campus courses. Instead of patching up an imperfect system, why not introduce a new assessment paradigm that both addressed the immediate integrity concerns and encouraged more enriching approaches to learning and assessment? While we all explored different types of alternative assessments—more writing and application questions, smaller low-stakes assessments, and take-home and collaborative exams—the gold standard was authentic assessment.

Authentic assessment has a range of defining characteristics—see Raynault et al.’s article for a thorough literature review and overview of several authentic assessment approaches—but some of the core characteristics are these: the solving of real-world problems, often through equally realistic processes; collaborative assessments that reflect the way we often work in our professions; and choice about the ways students select and address the problems they tackle, and how they express what they’ve learned. Such approaches offer the rich applied learning that we strive for in higher education, which can prove more meaningful to students while preparing them for careers and civic engagement after graduation. Authentic assessment is not new in many fields, particularly those with heavy uses of case studies and community-engaged learning, but trying to push those approaches earlier in the curriculum continues to be a challenge, especially when scaling to larger classes.

Our current issue explores how technology can play a role in facilitating the use of authentic assessment. When we first announced this focus for the issue, I had assumed that most of our submissions would have emerged directly from the COVID-forced pivot to remote learning, but I was pleasantly surprised to see that most of our authors have experience with this assessment approach that either precedes or transcends the pandemic. As many people have noted over the past few years, COVID sometimes led to innovative teaching approaches, but more often it simply shone a spotlight on the excellent pedagogical practices we already had within our institutions.

The technologies we see play out in this issue are not necessarily novel or cutting-edge themselves—no artificial intelligence or extended-reality scenarios here—but rather clever uses of tools at our disposal. While I was admittedly looking forward to seeing some mind-blowing new technologies, I am ultimately happier to see technologies that are already in our toolkits and approaches that are attainable by most readers. I was therefore intrigued when I read about Evans’ use of Microsoft Teams to structure professional collaboration and assessment practices in IT and business classes, and about Olivey’s use of Google Docs to provide live collaborative exams in a Molecular Biology class.

Two other authors push us a bit beyond standard tools, however. Hemmerich et al. explore the use of video-based clinical cases to provide authentic experiences to students who normally would not have access to rare but important clinical populations. In this situation, we see technology extending and scaling a traditionally authentic experience. Kowalik, on the other hand, uses technology to redesign the traditional library-instruction presentation as interactive online modules that provide

a more authentic information literacy lesson. In both of these cases, we see uses of technology to expand access to authentic experiences, one of the biggest hurdles to the adoption of authentic practices and assessments.

I was also pleased to see multiple authors reveal the connections between authentic assessment and equitable teaching. Abramenska-Lachheb et al. explore how authentic assessment is an ideal equity-focused course design choice, demonstrating its alignment with the concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). Their examples include a DEIJ-themed analysis of public health campaigns, which connects nicely to Kowalik's information literacy activities, as well as Scherzinger's efforts to incorporate media literacy into instructional projects that have students exploring real-world controversies. This group of essays lets us see how providing students with authentic tasks can empower them to engage consequential real-world issues in powerful and meaningful ways.

This collection of essays, despite centering on the theme of authentic assessment and technology, are very diverse in the technologies they apply, the assessment approaches they offer, and the disciplines from which they come. Whether you start with the broader conceptual frameworks laid out by Raynault, Abramenska-Lachheb, and their co-authors, or whether you dive right into the applications in the other essays, I think you will come to appreciate the breadth of work in this issue and these authors' common goal—to explore and promote the value of authentic assessment in advancing our students' success.

I am not sure if there is a scholarly or literary version of “bon appétit,” so I will just say that I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have.