

**Assessment Literacy for Linguistically and Culturally  
Diverse students with implications for staff development in  
HE**

O'LEARY, Christine

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/33257/>

---

This document is the author deposited version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

**Published version**

O'LEARY, Christine (2023). Assessment Literacy for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse students with implications for staff development in HE. In: University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD), Ireland, Dublin, 07-09 June 2023. UFHRD. (Unpublished)

---

**Copyright and re-use policy**

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

**Developing the assessment literacy of  
Linguistically and culturally diverse students  
within a large Business School**



**Dr Christine O'Leary**  
**Sheffield Hallam University**

# Outline

Introduction: rationale, context & aims

Key findings from the literature review

Key design principles

Implementation in 5 pilot modules (2 exemplars)

Evaluation: methodology and some preliminary findings

Implications for HE educators

## **Introduction: rationale**

**New ways of working** during the pandemic led to unprecedented changes in the **workplace** (De Lucas et al., 2020)

Universities underwent a **similar paradigm shift** in **curriculum delivery and management**, with implications for **practice and learning**, including the role played by **digital technology** and **face to face** teaching (Dwivedi et al., 2020; Carolan et al., 2020)

**Educators/Lecturers** had to **rethink** their role within the **Higher Education system** (Rapanta et al., 2021), including how to support **student learning**.

**Linguistically and culturally diverse** students face further **challenges**, including engaging with **unfamiliar assessment practices**, leading to an **attainment gap** with home students (Kerridge and Simpson, 2019)

More **inclusive practices** in assessment post pandemic are therefore essential to the development of an **innovative and adaptable global workforce**

## **Introduction: context**

- **A large department** within Sheffield Business School focusing on **Business & Management** courses at **UG** and **PG**
- **2,000-3,000 international students** studying **Business & Management/ Finance/ Service Sector** in Sheffield Business School, including in partner institutions in **Hong Kong, Botswana and Shanghai.**

## Introduction: aims of the project

The project aims to **promote and embed a change in practice** to improve **assessment literacy** for all students, with particular attention to the **needs** of the **linguistically and culturally diverse** international student body

# The Literature review: Focus

- ❑ Studies, both pre and during Covid, have focused on the **international student academic and cultural experience** within the UK (Bamford, 2008, 2020; Foster, 2020)
- ❑ The **BAME/BME students' attainment gap** have also been explored, e.g. Berger and Wild (2017) calling for more **inclusive approach** to LTA.
- ❑ The **review** focuses on the role that **assessment design** can play in improving **assessment literacy** and students' **ability to engage** successfully in the process.

## Some definitions

**Assessment literacy** can be defined as “the **ability to design, select, interpret, and use assessment results** appropriately for education decisions” (Quilter and Gallini 2000, 116).

**Inclusive assessment** refers to the **design and use of fair and effective assessment methods and practices** that enable **all** students to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do (Kaur, 2017).

**Multimodal assessment** refers to a wide range of applications that **enable students/ tutors to share, comment, create, and discuss digital contents** via a range of medium such as text, visual, audio, tactile, gestural, and spatial representations. (Curwood, 2012; Silseth and Gilje, 2017).



## Literature review: Key findings

The role of assessment **for** and **as** learning which incorporate **choice, formative tutor & peer feedback** in improving performance and skills (Boud, 1995; Boud & Falchikov, 2006, 2007; Benson & Brack, 2010)

The benefits of **involving** students in **assessment design** (e.g. developing rubrics/ co-constructing assessment) (Grainger, 2021; Kaur, 2017; Kilgour et al., 2020; Andrews et al., 2018)

The importance of **scaffolding** the **learning/ assessment** process to improve **assessment literacy, reflection** and **student autonomy** independently and in **collaboration with peers** (e.g. online formative assessment/ e.portfolios) (e.g. Ma et al., 2021; Zou et al., 2021)

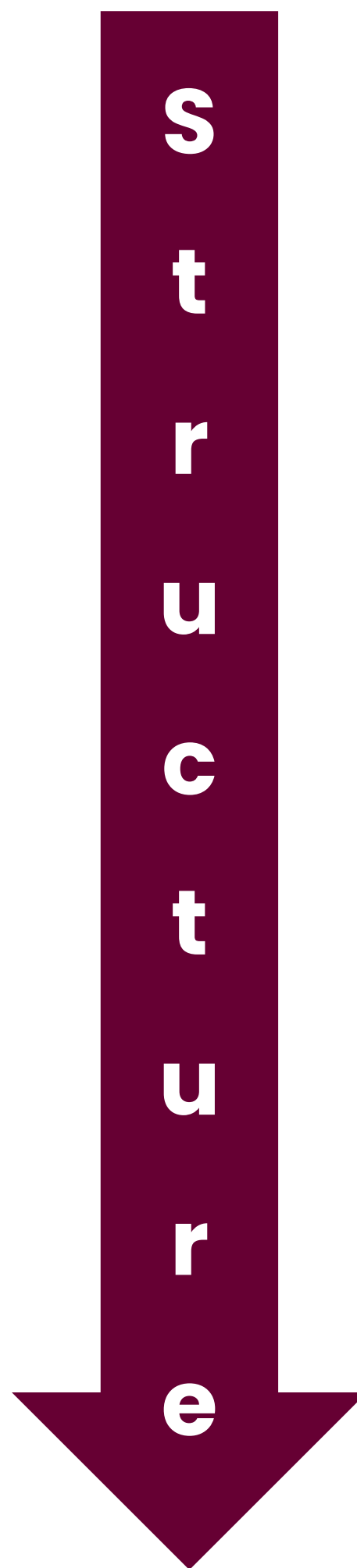
## Literature review: Key findings

**Multi-modal assessment**, can cater for a range of **needs** and **learning preferences** (e.g. Ross, Curwood & Bell, 2020; Cartner & Hallas, 2020)

The importance of considering the development of **meta-affective knowledge** and **emotional intelligence** when **designing formative learning activities/assessment** (Raccanello et al., 2022; O'Leary, 2014, 2018).

**Effective learning from (*and about*) assessment** is not just about tutor to student feedback but also the **ability** and **opportunities** to **self** and **peer** assess. (Sadler, 2010).

# Key design principles



**Scaffold** the assessment task (and learning) through **interrelated activities** to promote assessment literacy e.g. online portfolios

Consider the **cognitive, affective and behavioural domains** when designing activities e.g. conflict resolution in groupwork

**Build in** opportunities for **social/ collaborative** learning/ assessment **activities** through **multimodal** assessment (see definition)

Include a **diagnostic self/ peer assessment** as a starting point where possible.

**E  
n  
g  
a  
g  
e  
m  
e  
n  
t**

**Develop** students **evaluative judgment** through **self** and **peer** assessment

**Develop** clear **criteria/rubric** and create **opportunities** for students **to apply these** e.g. self/peer assessment of work and/or co-creation of the rubric text

**Create space** for **self** and **collaborative** reflection

Create **opportunities** for **engaging** with **interim feedback** (self/ peer or tutor)

# • Implementation examples

- Module Academic and Professional Excellence (AF, BF, CF occurrences)

<p><b>Reasons for changes to assessment</b></p>	<p>To prepare and support a diverse international cohort better for the two assessment tasks. Currently, Task 1 requires students to undertake independent research and to select a company and a competitor and then analyse the CSR practices of those companies using academic models and theories as tools. Task 2 (a) requires students to prepare and deliver a group presentation. Task 2 (b) requires students to write an individual reflection.</p>
<p><b>Proposed changes to assessment</b></p>	<p>For Task 1, the following changes have been proposed:          In groups, the students will research and choose <b>individually an industry sector</b> – and <b>identify companies within the sector</b> – with the <b>guidance of seminar tutors</b>. The classes will be delivered in IT rooms which will facilitate this.</p> <p>For Task 2, the following changes have been proposed:          Introduction of <b>peer assessment/feedback</b> during <b>the formative, practice</b>, Dragon’s Den group presentations.</p> <p>This would also help the students with their <b>individual reflections</b>.</p>

# • Implementation examples

- Module Academic and Professional Excellence (AF, BF, CF occurrences)

<p><b>Assessment design protocols covered</b> (Delete as appropriate)</p>	<p>Scaffold the assessment task (and learning) through interrelated activities to promote assessment literacy e.g. online portfolios</p> <p>Build in opportunities for social/ collaborative learning/ assessment activities through multimodal assessment (see definition)</p> <p>Develop students' evaluative judgment through self and peer assessment.</p> <p>Create space for self and collaborative reflection.</p> <p>Create opportunities for engaging with interim feedback (self/ peer or tutor).</p>
---	---

# • Implementation examples

<b>Module</b>	Strategic Marketing Management and Decision Making
<b>Reasons for changes to assessment</b>	Students struggle to understand and apply some of the key marketing concepts that are needed for this portfolio assessment.
<b>Proposed changes to assessment</b>	<p><b>Break-down assessment brief in-class</b> to explain how to structure report.</p> <p>Provide <b>exemplar template</b> for assessment brief with bulleted list of what we would expect in each section (use this to demonstrate to students how metrics can inform the plan at different stages).</p> <p><i>Consider</i> whether to refer students to examples online of marketing plans.</p> <p>Put students in <b>learning sets</b> at the start of the block delivery and allocate a <b>fictional company</b> to each set. Then arrange <b>formative activities</b> that support the set to <b>populate the exemplar template</b> step-by-step as they work through the teaching block.</p> <p><b>Learning sets</b> share their <b>group work</b> at the end of the block for the <b>purpose of peer group formative assessment</b>.</p> <p>Revisit delivery of marketing metrics part of module.</p> <p>Students work on a <b>company of their choice</b>, as before, for the <b>summative individual portfolio assessment</b> and end that with a <b>piece of self-reflection</b>.</p>

# Methodology

- Evaluation
- The evaluation is a mixed method approach:
  - ❑ an evaluation pre and post intervention using an **assessment literacy measurement instrument** using Smith et al's (2011).
  - ❑ **Qualitative interviews** to gauge student's experience of the **assessment post intervention** in 22/23.
  - ❑ The success of the interventions will also be evaluated through **standard quantitative measures** such as **MEQs** and **student performance** as reflected by their grade.



# Preliminary findings- survey: N=61

Country	UK: 43.75%	Botswana: 56.25	Hong Kong: 0		
Gender	Male: 18.75	Female: 81.25			
Level of study	L6: 37.5%	L7: 62,5%			
One assignment complete	60%	Last assignment completed	33.33%		
Understanding how to apply rules	86.67%	Assessment procedure clear	80%	Understanding how to apply assessment	86.7%
Understanding the criteria	100%	Do what I need to get the grade I want	100%	Assessment show me how much of the course content I understand	86.7%

# Implications for HE Educators

- Increase **choice** e.g. a selection of live projects
- **Peer support**: Learning sets (group practice) & peer feedback/ assessment
- **Tutor support**: formative feedback/ exemplars for guidance
- Use of **online portfolio-based** assessment
- Increase **opportunity** for **self-reflection**
- **Scaffold learning** through interrelated activities

- **Thank you for Listening**
- Questions and Comments ?

- **References/ bibliography**

- Click on the link to access the full bibliography:  
[here](#)

- de Lucas, A., del Val Núñez, A. & Gravila, G. (2021) Workplace change within the COVID-19 context: a grounded theory approach, *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 34:1, 2297-2316. doi: 10.1080/1331677X.2020.1862689
- Dwivedi, Y., Hughes, L., Coombs, C., Constantiou, I., Duan, Y., Edwards, J., et al. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on information management research and practice: Transforming education, work and life. *International Journal of Information Management* 55. doi: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102211
- Carolan, C., Davies, C. L., Crookes, P., McGhee, S., and Rox-Burgh, M. (2020). COVID 19: disruptive impacts and transformative opportunities in undergraduate nurse education. *Nurse Education Practice* 46. doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2020.102807
- Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P. et al. Balancing Technology, Pedagogy and the New Normal: Post-pandemic Challenges for Higher Education. *Postdigit Science Education* 3, 715–742 (2021). doi:/10.1007/s42438-021-00249-1

- Kerridge C. & Colin, C (2019). Narrowing the attainment gap between international and domestic students::use of a simulation and experiential learning in mixed-cohort strategic management teaching. *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, 46 , pp. 108-110.
- Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P. et al. Balancing Technology, Pedagogy and the New Normal: Post-pandemic Challenges for Higher Education. *Postdigit Science Education* 3, 715–742 (2021). doi:/10.1007/s42438-021-00249-1
- O'Leary, C. (2014). Developing autonomous language learners in HE : a social constructivist perspective. In G. Murray (Ed.), *Social Dimensions of Autonomy in Language Learning* (pp. 15-36). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Evans, C. (2013). Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(1), 70-120.  
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0034654312474350>.
- Moriña, A. (2017). Inclusive education in higher education: challenges and opportunities. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32(1), 3-17.  
<http://10.1080/08856257.2016.1254964>.
- Smith, C. D., Worsfold, K., Davies, L., Fisher, R., & McPhail, R. (2013). Assessment literacy and student learning: The case for explicitly developing students assessment literacy. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 38(1), 44-60.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2011.598636>