

Developing a debate culture to support TBL, enhance engagement, and foster authentic learning and assessment

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Introduction

- ❖ Campus based authentic learning and assessment practices challenged due to the pandemic
- ❖ Synchronous online teaching:
 - An act of necessity (?)
 - A limiting reality or a limiting belief?



- ❑ Our experience of developing a debate learning culture online
- ❖ We demonstrate how a combination of formative and summative online debate assessments can foster authentic teaching and learning practice, within a Team Based Learning (TBL) frame
- ❖ We discuss the impact of our initiative on the students' learning experience based on feedback provided in official university surveys and unofficial reflective accounts

Setting the context

A post graduate, research led,
accounting module

Diverse student cohort of 50
to 70 students per year

TBL had been in use prior to
the pandemic

Diverse assessment elements



❑ Pre pandemic: in-class debates used as a distinct assessment element

- Better and faster cohort integration through TBL
- Instant feedback and peer evaluation
- Authentic assessment standards
- Critical thinking skills
- Enhance ability to cope with controversial questions in subsequent individual assessments

Theoretical underpinning

- ❑ Eight critical elements of authentic learning and assessment
 - ❖ Challenging to the appropriate standard
 - ❖ Outcome oriented
 - ❖ Ensures transfer of knowledge from the assessment to the work environment
 - ❖ Involves metacognition (self-evaluation of learning and critical reflection)
 - ❖ Accurate in terms of the skills and abilities assessed
 - ❖ Creates an assessment environment that simulates the real world
 - ❖ Provides discussion and feedback opportunities
 - ❖ Includes a collaborative element

(Gulikers et al., 2004; Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014; Kirsten et al., 2021)

Implications and challenges

Lack of
experience

Connectivity
issues

Diverse time
zones

Limited ability
to help
students in
real time

Synchronous
online
teaching

How group work
outside teaching
time will be
organised?

(?) Will they
work in the
break out
rooms (?)

How to assess
individual
contribution to
group work?

Organising the module around “the debate”

□ Motivation

- ❖ Set an actual debate assessment towards the end of term on a contemporary theme of interest - non related to lecture material -

□ Practice

- ❖ Organise the students into fixed groups
- ❖ Set a different debate topic each week
- ❖ Weekly cumulative assessment
- ❖ Allow time for group practice during lecture time in break out rooms
- ❖ Ask some of the groups to present their weekly debates
- ❖ Ask each group to reflect on their performance
- ❖ Ask for peer evaluation from other groups
- ❖ Provide feedback and link it to the end of term debate assessment to sustain motivation

Organising the assessment

❑ Standards for individual performance

- ❖ Students marked on individual basis based on their own performance
- ❖ A group activities log is used to demonstrate individual contribution

❑ During the assessment

- ❖ Alternative online platforms to alleviate connectivity issues
- ❖ One group per online session (one Zoom invite per group)
- ❖ Allow extra time for breaks and discussion between the assessors
- ❖ Manage group dynamics
- ❖ Provide constructive feedback
- ❖ Ask for back up electronic copies of the material in use
- ❖ Record the debates and the feedback for future reference and scrutiny
- ❖ Have a back up plan

Did it work?



More interactive
than
conventional
sessions

Students
appeared better
motivated and
engaged

The debate
preparation
enabled TBL to
work

Attainment has
actually
improved

Our initial
hesitation
turned to joy, it
was actually
fun

Outcomes for the students 1

❑ Academic socialisation

It allowed me to develop some form of relationships with other students which I believe is a key aspect of studying at university, the social benefits

Compared to other modules, this made lectures very interactive and engaging

Alongside gaining new knowledge, this interaction assisted me to meet new classmates and make new friends.

Since its lockdown and restrictions still goes on, it is hard to meet people and know them, but this gave us the chance. I loved the way in which the assessment is conducted.

Outcomes for the students 2

❑ A constructive challenge

I'm a person with stage fear when comes to present something, but everything changed

Working in a group meant that we had to be organised, committed, and accommodating to others

I was a little late to realise that it might be scary, but it boosts the confidence of speaking in front of an audience



Outcomes for the students 3

❑ Transferable skills

I believe this skill, that I developed on this course, will help me in my future career if I were to progress into a managerial role and had to organise my team.

This module has helped me brush-up on my skills. These include interpersonal, presentation, team working and written communication skills

Furthermore, collaborating with other group members from different ethnic backgrounds brush-up up on my team working and interpersonal skills.

Limitations

- ❖ Some students found it harder than others to communicate within multicultural groups
- ❖ Internet connectivity and time-zone differences posed a few challenges to the cohesion of some groups

Concluding thoughts

- ❖ Whilst the lockdown challenged educators' ability to use innovative approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment, such as, TBL, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), etc., there is still room for experimentation
- ❖ Feedback received from our students demonstrates that debate practice has had a considerably positive impact on their learning experience
- ❖ In our case debate assessments proved to be a key ingredient of TBL practice within a virtual learning space

Thank You!
For your attention!

