IMPROVING ASSESSMENT WITH TRANSPARENCY IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

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SUBTHEME: Assessment

BACKGROUND

Success in higher education often depends on a student's ability to navigate the "unwritten rules" of academia. The Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TiLT) Framework provides guidance on how to improve the clarity of assessments by 1) explicitly stating the purpose of the assessment; 2) clearly describing the task; and 3) providing criteria for success. Benefits of transparent assessment include increased academic confidence and sense of belonging (Winklemes, 2016).

AIM

The aim of this study was to evaluate the transparency of assessments across our school, in order to establish a baseline understanding of the current assessment practices and identify areas for potential improvement.

METHOD

Assessments delivered as part of coursework units in 2023 were scored against a learning-focused assessment rubric (Palmer 2018). The rubric assigns scores in four domains – purpose, task, criteria and additional learning-focused qualities – with each domain comprised of four or five criteria. The scores reflect the importance of each criteria (scale of 1 to 3) and the extent to which the assessment meets that criteria (fully, partially or not met). Exams and quizzes were excluded from the study. Total and domain specific scores were transformed into percentages, representing the extent to which the assessment meets the criteria in that domain.

RESULTS

A total of 148 assessments were reviewed across 57 courses. Overall, assessments scored highest on the 'Task' domain with a median score of 88% [interquartile range (IQR) 75, 97]. This indicates that assessments were generally effective at clearly describing the task. In contrast, the 'Purpose' domain had the lowest median score of 60% [IQR 38, 88] and scores for this domain exhibited the greatest variability across assessments compared to the other domains evaluated. The review highlighted that more explicit purpose statements could substantially improve transparency without modifying the assessment itself.

CONCLUSION

Most assessments effectively describe task requirements, however there is substantial opportunity to improve transparency by better communicating assessment purpose.

REFERENCES

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