

USING CREATIVE ASSESSMENT TASKS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN LEARNING AND CONCEPTUALISING THE CHALLENGING CONTENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Over the decades the subject Biochemistry has always been feared by university students as a very difficult, challenging and somewhat dry subject. It is a core second year unit that has to be passed for progression in most biological science degrees. Traditionally it has high failure rates and is often over assessed attributing to difficult student learning and lack of engagement with subject matter. Over the last two semesters, I have used creative assessment tasks to engage the students with the subject matter. The first task, in metabolic biochemistry, involved the construction of a pamphlet that was to be used in a medical centre to explain the cellular metabolism of diabetes. This task was conducted in groups of eight students and had to target 3 levels of audience; a medically trained person, a young adult with no medical or scientific training and a child under 10 years. In the second task in introductory biochemistry students were required to work in groups to produce a poster describing the process of protein synthesis as a fairy tale (nucleus to a functionally secreted protein). In both units the students have enjoyed the tasks, engaged with the subject matter and failure rates have substantially declined.

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