Chat Transcript for Session Topic: Students deciding on assessment criteria

Discussion of
Hernández, Students' Engagement in the Development of Criteria to Assess Written Tasks

Facilitated by
Maddalena Taras
University of Sunderland, UK

Moderated by
Catherine Owen
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Date/Time	Author	Comment
31/05/2007 12:06:23	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Good morning, afternoon or evening! I'm Catherine Owen the REAP Project Manager and I'm delighted to welcome you to this chat session on student engagement in assessment criteria development. I'm your moderator for this session.
31/05/2007 12:06:34	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I'm very happy to be joined by case study author Rosario Hernandez from University College Dublin and by Maddalena Taras from the University of Sunderland, who is the expert facilitator for this session.
31/05/2007 12:06:54	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Welcome everyone to a discussion of Rosario's very interesting case study. I would like to kick off with a question. Students were engaged in the production of a variety of Spanish texts: with different types of texts was it appropriate to use the same criteria?
31/05/2007 12:06:59	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I hope that everyone participating in this session will find it valuable. If things become busy and questions are flowing fast, please give Rosario and Maddalena time to respond before posting another comment or questions.
31/05/2007 12:07:17	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Over to you Rosario...
31/05/2007 12:08:27	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	there are issues about criteria that end the involvement of students that make us think
31/05/2007 12:09:17	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	I find that many colleagues do not involve students at all, is that your experience?
31/05/2007 12:09:53	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	In an objective-based curriculum, there is usually little wish to do so?
31/05/2007 12:10:01	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I think that's true Rosario. Why did you want to involve students?

31/05/2007 12:10:31	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Gill, you are right but we need to go beyond that currucullum model
31/05/2007 12:10:43	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	I agree, Rosario!!
31/05/2007 12:11:06	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Catherine, i believe that is they are involve students take ownership of the criteria and make it their own
31/05/2007 12:11:07	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	More and more students ask to be involved especially if they have the experience of being involved in other courses
31/05/2007 12:11:48	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	teaching is more collaborative, why not assessment?
31/05/2007 12:12:21	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	If we are involved in post-graduate or professional education students often have a wealth of relevant experience to draw on
31/05/2007 12:12:47	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	Do you think the teachers and their institutions need more help in understanding outcomes-based assessment so it allows this kind of involvement?
31/05/2007 12:13:15	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes, my challenge now is to start with 1st years. I find it easy with posdgrads and final year students
31/05/2007 12:13:25	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Does your model go far enough to involve students in assesment?
31/05/2007 12:14:12	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	Rosario I think we need to think in terms of building blocks of capability and look to develop these from first to final year
31/05/2007 12:14:44	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	After all we talk about developing life long learners why not life long assessors?
31/05/2007 12:14:49	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	How much previous experience did your 3rd year students have in being taught about objectives or outcomes (whichever applies)?
31/05/2007 12:14:55	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Gill perhaps dialogue instead of understanding because the outcomes-bsed model offers possibility if we go beyond the initial..
31/05/2007 12:15:10	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Andy, I agree
31/05/2007 12:15:33	**Maha Bali** (MahaBali)	Andy: i like "lifelong assessors" - more reflection
31/05/2007 12:15:51	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Very little because my university is in the process of changing towards that model now
31/05/2007 12:16:06	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Andy, I agree - there cannot be life-long learners without life-long assessors both go together

31/05/2007 12:16:40	Andy Sharp (AndySharp)	I am thinking about the effect that Higher education has on the broader community not just inside Higher education. Whole communties can benefit
31/05/2007 12:16:41	Rosario Hernandez (RosarioHernandez)	YEs David Boud talk about lifelong assessoers and that is what I try
31/05/2007 12:18:13	Gillian Palmer (GillP)	Andy: I agree that there are wider social benefits - just am suffering Orwellian nightmares at the thought of ever going out to supper again....
31/05/2007 12:18:13	Catherine Owen (CatherineOwen)	In the previous session we talked about scaffolding and the issue that sometimes students don't have a clear enough understanding of the demands of the subject to develop criteria - any comments?
31/05/2007 12:18:24	Rosario Hernandez (RosarioHernandez)	WE talked about employability skills before and having the capacity to assess may be part of those skills
31/05/2007 12:19:02	radu catalin (karadu)	lifelong assessors as far as the student apply for courses in the same institution ....
31/05/2007 12:19:17	Maddalena Taras (Maddalena Taras)	By discussing and developing criteria they get an understanding of the subject demands
31/05/2007 12:19:25	Rosario Hernandez (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Catherine, that is my experience too and the teacher needs to provide the bridge there
31/05/2007 12:19:29	Gillian Palmer (GillP)	Rosario, this employability issue is one that interests me particularly. The implications for employers are enormous, aren't they?
31/05/2007 12:19:46	Rosario Hernandez (RosarioHernandez)	I think so Gill
31/05/2007 12:20:10	Derek Rowntree (DerekRowntree)	I've arrived late (sorry) but have you given us any exampoles of what you mean by criteria, Rosario?
31/05/2007 12:20:46	Gillian Palmer (GillP)	Catherine: the scaffolding issue is really important in the employment context just raised. Do you have examples of where it can and cannot work?
31/05/2007 12:21:16	Rosario Hernandez (RosarioHernandez)	Derek, I so your question on the board and you are right. sometimes criteria and learning objectives are close but there is also a distinction
31/05/2007 12:21:48	Derek Rowntree (DerekRowntree)	So cn you give us an example?
31/05/2007 12:22:20	Rosario Hernandez (RosarioHernandez)	Students objectives may be to improve their writing in Spanish the criteria will spell out what they need to do to achieve that.
31/05/2007 12:23:01	Maha Bali (MahaBali)	e.g. correct grammar, structured sentences, etc?

31/05/2007 12:23:10	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	Ah, 'student' objectives....
31/05/2007 12:23:13	**Derek Rowntree** (DerekRowntree)	Do you mean listing the words they are concerned about?
31/05/2007 12:23:57	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	More expecifically, content, structure, lingusitic accuracy and risk-taking that were there criteria agreed with these group of students
31/05/2007 12:24:20	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I'm intrigued by 'risk-taking'...
31/05/2007 12:24:28	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Don't the criteria help us to assess the objectives?
31/05/2007 12:24:37	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Derek, I mean range of vocabulary, for example
31/05/2007 12:24:51	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	Fully support your apporach, Roasrio, but am trying to understand how 'objectives' (defined by whomever) fit with outcomes. You already stated Dublin is moving to Outcomes so I continue to wonder. Any enlightenment from your personal perspective?
31/05/2007 12:25:15	**Derek Rowntree** (DerekRowntree)	Thank you, Rosario.
31/05/2007 12:25:39	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Catherine as the texts were for formative purposes I encouraged students to take risks so that the new version could be improved on that basis
31/05/2007 12:26:22	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Rosario - what about outcomes?
31/05/2007 12:26:51	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Rosario, it is very positive to encourage risk-taking, languages need that.
31/05/2007 12:27:50	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	I think there is still some work to be done regarding objectives and outcomes. some academics have had no time to reflect about that because my university is also dealing with a C-change in structures
31/05/2007 12:28:13	**Maha Bali** (MahaBali)	C-change?
31/05/2007 12:28:17	**Gillian Palmer** (GillP)	Understood. Good luck
31/05/2007 12:28:39	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Catherine, I think that outcome put the students again in charge of their learning

31/05/2007 12:28:49	**Derek Rowntree** (DerekRowntree)	sea-change? (major change)
31/05/2007 12:28:59	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Maha I mean a radical change
31/05/2007 12:29:10	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	So how does that fit with the changes in your institution?
31/05/2007 12:30:23	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	I feel that there are opportunities to be creative although it may seem that we are told in which direction we must go
31/05/2007 12:30:46	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	Rosario what were the key challenges that students felt they had overcome as a result of your design?
31/05/2007 12:31:18	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	For example, we can control assessment more than before and many have moved away from the traditional 3 hour exam
31/05/2007 12:31:58	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	How, if at all, did the tutor influence the criteria?
31/05/2007 12:32:29	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Confidence building was very significant, understanding written texts as readers were some of the issues reported
31/05/2007 12:33:01	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	Did students feel the confidence carry over into other modules Rosario?
31/05/2007 12:33:36	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Maddalena, the tutor facilitated the discussion after the groups came up with different ideas and she put some shape into it.
31/05/2007 12:34:19	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	For example, one group did not consider important linguistic accuracy and the others convinced them
31/05/2007 12:35:02	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Rosario--so I assume that the tutor's primary role (after facilitating discussion) was to observe to see if groups and inidividuals were generating misperceptions, or were in error regarding the subject matter?
31/05/2007 12:35:03	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	That's good because it develops a shared understanding
31/05/2007 12:35:07	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	The risk taking was also introduced by the tutor and the students discuss its usufullnes
31/05/2007 12:35:20	**Derek Rowntree** (DerekRowntree)	Rosario, how do you feeWould it be fair to say that your stduents negotiated criteria rather than chose them?

31/05/2007 12:36:39	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Derek you are right. There was negociation but we can say that they chose the criteria after negociating them
31/05/2007 12:37:17	**Derek Rowntree** (DerekRowntree)	If you were suddenly gifted with ten tmes as many students, would you feel confident about taking the same approach?
31/05/2007 12:38:48	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	I dodn't think it will be as easy to do it with large groups but I think it is important to think about how to do it in that situation
31/05/2007 12:38:48	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	That's a useful point Derek - is this scaleable?
31/05/2007 12:39:17	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	I am hopin to try something similar in a much larger class next year
31/05/2007 12:39:24	**Derek Rowntree** (DerekRowntree)	Thank you Rosario; all strength to you.
31/05/2007 12:39:54	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	The negotiation process may have to be done differently
31/05/2007 12:40:01	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Rosario - back to Sean's point. What was the tutor's role once criteria were selected?
31/05/2007 12:41:38	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	It was just to collect all the ideas, put them together and distibute the criteria to all students. The criteria were used throughout the semester
31/05/2007 12:42:29	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	And how did you handle feedback to students after the tasks were completed?
31/05/2007 12:42:45	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	Were all of the criteria equally weighted?
31/05/2007 12:43:24	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Using the criteria and providing opportunities for students to discuss the feedback with the tutor
31/05/2007 12:43:28	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Rosario--the case study mentions (I think) that students chose assessments that were collaborative; was the tutor's role to go among these groups and correct misperceptions, etc.?
31/05/2007 12:44:25	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Rosario--thanks for that. The tutor then used forms of informal assessment to assess misunderstandings, etc.?
31/05/2007 12:44:45	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	In certain texts more weighing was given to certain criteria ie. originality in creative writing as opposed to the argument in more argumentative texts

31/05/2007 12:45:01	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Rosario, students commented that they would have liked to be involved in grading. Why did you not consider it?
31/05/2007 12:45:09	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes, Sean
31/05/2007 12:46:21	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	No, Maddalena. Students liked to be provided with a grade at the beginning because that was their experience of assessment before
31/05/2007 12:47:44	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Were the students ever involved in grading?
31/05/2007 12:47:51	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	There are several case studies in the conference where students have been empowered to peer assess in a formative way but the final marks are provided by the tutor. There seems to be a crisis of confidence about students grading...
31/05/2007 12:48:05	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Sean, Yes there was collaborative writing too and in those cases both peer assessment and tutor asessment was used
31/05/2007 12:48:59	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	It is not students crisis of confidence, but tutor's that student grading supports
31/05/2007 12:49:07	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Catherine, I have full confidence in students ability to mark their work. I try to get away from marking everything they do
31/05/2007 12:49:20	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Who has the crisis Catherine, do you think? Is it the students or the staff?
31/05/2007 12:49:47	**Terri Rees** (trees)	sorry, my typing is slow
31/05/2007 12:50:06	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	thanks, Rosario
31/05/2007 12:50:16	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Maddalena I agree
31/05/2007 12:50:26	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I think both students and staff are fearful. I have also heard to instances where other stakeholders (parents particularly) are outraged by peer grading or criteria-setting.
31/05/2007 12:51:04	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Why Catherine
31/05/2007 12:51:10	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Hmm, yes, a good point and increasingly so with the student funding situation here in the UK as it is
31/05/2007 12:51:38	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Because parents assume the process lacks rigour and thus the qualification is debased.

31/05/2007 12:52:04	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Tutors and students need to support each other and work together by grading/double-marking each others work
31/05/2007 12:52:12	**Terri Rees** (trees)	They expect an 'expert' to do it. After all, they feel thatr is what they are paying for
31/05/2007 12:52:41	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I also concur with Catherine
31/05/2007 12:52:46	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes, Maddalena. We go back to dialogue and understanding
31/05/2007 12:52:54	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	It would seem to make sense that if we belive in our methods to develop students we should be trusting of the students to apply these. If we properly equip we can trust accordingly
31/05/2007 12:52:58	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Grading does not ahve to be either/or -both grade and compare and so satisfy everyone
31/05/2007 12:53:02	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Trees - I think this perspective is profoundly widespread. Especially with parents of first-generation students.
31/05/2007 12:53:18	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Yes, I think you are right
31/05/2007 12:53:32	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	How do we change it?
31/05/2007 12:53:56	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	But I am also attracted to Andy's perspective. We need to educate employers, parents and other stakeholders.
31/05/2007 12:54:03	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	By putting in place sound pedagogic practice we can defend - then defend it!
31/05/2007 12:54:12	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think it will only change with time, when thgis generation see the benefits for their children
31/05/2007 12:54:30	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Instutional reputation is also key.
31/05/2007 12:54:50	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Then the messages we sent to stakeholders need to be meaningfull
31/05/2007 12:55:07	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Reputation and good practice should go together
31/05/2007 12:55:28	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	Indeed! Just five minutes left for last questions...
31/05/2007 12:55:32	**Terri Rees** (trees)	That is so true, and I think that CETL's in the UK have a part to play in pushing forward best practice and even innovation

31/05/2007 12:55:34	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Catherine--I agree with you--stakeholders often do not understand that collaborative learning is often more effective; has anyone had any experience with dealing with disgruntled stakeholders on this issue?
31/05/2007 12:55:35	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	Yes, Rosario -clarify our messages
31/05/2007 12:56:15	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	So, do you think after all that students have not got the "skills" to get involved in assessing their learning?
31/05/2007 12:56:54	**Maddalena Taras** (Maddalena Taras)	If they haven't how can they learn efficiently Rosario?
31/05/2007 12:57:03	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think they have them, they just need to be convinced of the value of it all
31/05/2007 12:57:22	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Perhaps, we need both but if we involve students we develop their confidence
31/05/2007 12:57:46	**Terri Rees** (trees)	They need to understand WHY thye should do it. What the benefit will be for them
31/05/2007 12:58:22	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	I think they learn by being supported by the teacher and from their classmates
31/05/2007 12:58:22	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	It perhaps goes back to what we see as being the purpose of participation in HE
31/05/2007 12:58:46	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Yes Andy
31/05/2007 12:58:54	**Rosario Hernandez** (RosarioHernandez)	Yes Andy
31/05/2007 12:59:19	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I think it is definitely lunchtime for the UK and EIRE participants! If your question hasn't been answered or if you would like to participate in more debate about this fascinating topic, please remember that the message-board forums will be available throughout the duration of the conference and for two weeks subsequently. A great place for more leisurely and reflective debate!
31/05/2007 12:59:25	**Andy Sharp** (AndySharp)	Students at some point need to think about the purpose too. Once that is clearer almost everything that is done after that point can be screened through that filter
31/05/2007 12:59:35	**Catherine Owen** (CatherineOwen)	I'm now going to bring this session to an end. Thank you very much to Rosario and to Maddalena and to all of you who took part. The next live session at 1.30pm is our final keynote of the conference from Professor Mantz Yorke. And please do consider pa

- TRANSCRIPT ENDS -