



Assessment Toolkit

Assessing Authentically

Never stand still

Teaching @UNSW

Overview

Authentic assessment focuses on students using and applying knowledge and skills in real-life settings. For example, you might have students take part in:

- simulation or role play of a scenario
- completion of a real-world task
- assessment in a workplace setting.

More traditional forms of assessment, such as essays and examinations, have no specific application in most real-world settings. Authentic assessment helps students contextualise their learning and to see how real-life conditions or situations, in all their unpredictability, ambiguity and complexity, affect their theoretical knowledge. As they draw together their knowledge and skills to engage productively and solve problems, their behaviour clearly shows, both to staff and themselves, the level of capacity or competency they have gained. Authenticity is a fundamental characteristic of good assessment practice and students usually value it highly.

When to use

Ideally authentic assessment should provide long-term student engagement with learning and can occur at any stage of the teaching program. It should utilise a variety of resources and perspectives over a sustained period of time, as well as peer collaborations to promote engaging and open conversation.

Authentic assessment should be based in an environment that the student could work in, learn in or utilize post task and include the development of a scenario. This type of learning and teaching is preferable toward the end of a degree when students are comfortable collaborating and working on ill-defined problems, and have skills in reflection.

Benefits

Authentic assessment can benefit students in many ways:

- Students generally accept authentic assessment as a valid approach, and favour it as a method that motivates them to engage in deeper and more productive learning.
- Because it involves addressing "ill-structured", unpredictable challenges, it helps students rehearse for the complex ambiguities of working and professional life, and to visualise themselves as real professionals.
- It requires students to construct unique responses rather than selecting from pre-existing options. In this way it challenges students to undertake complex higher order reasoning, and to think independently and creatively.
- Students can reflect on and assess their own work and effort. They can see, meaningfully, in situ, how effectively they apply conceptual learning.
- Students can integrate their learning in a holistic way, bringing together work samples collected over time, perhaps in the preparation of a portfolio.
- External stakeholders, such as industry groups and professional bodies, favour universities offering work-relevant experiences. Authentic assessment enhances graduate employability by developing students' "work-readiness" capabilities.
- It can creatively disrupt the traditional power balance in assessment by allowing external markers to give feedback and/or grade students' work, and students to actively engage in self and peer assessment.

- Authentic assessment addresses Boud and Falchikov's (2005) calls for "sustainable assessment". It helps equip learners with relevant workplace skills and competencies and prepares them for lifelong learning.

Challenges

The very characteristics that make authentic assessment so meaningful for students also present significant challenges.

- Unpredictability increases the potential for things to go wrong and jeopardise a student's chance to demonstrate their achievements and capabilities.
- Authentic assessment in actual workplaces can place a significant burden on associated staff. Arranging each student's unique setting in advance, negotiating their individual tasks and interpreting and grading their work can be very time-consuming.
- Developing appropriate simulations is resource intensive, although it can yield long-term returns.
- Assessment tasks, if their scope is not carefully articulated at the outset, can expand to create an unreasonable workload for students. The resulting problems or delays in completing tasks may place students and staff in an awkward position with host organisations or supervisors.

Authentic assessment tasks may be problematic for particular students. For example:

- Access to off-campus activities may be difficult for students with mobility issues. Block placements may place prohibitive additional burdens on students with carer responsibilities.
- Students may feel anxious about whether they will fit in, whether they will be able to communicate effectively and so on, particularly when high-stakes assessment will depend on their capacity to interact within the authentic setting.
- Make sure you tell students what accommodations and alternative arrangements are available in such circumstances. Also, be aware of students' diverse levels of experience in the types of authentic settings established for learning and assessment activities, so that students can be well prepared and supported at all stages.

Strategies

In planning for authentic assessment, ensure that the tasks and activities possess the distinctive characteristics of authenticity, as outlined in Figure 1 (adapted from this [Resource from University of Wollongong](#) 2005).

Figure 1: Characteristics of authentic task design

Characteristics of authentic tasks	Associated design features of authentic learning and assessment activities and tasks
Authentic tasks have real-world relevance.	Activities match as nearly as possible the real-world tasks of professionals in practice rather than decontextualised or classroom-based tasks.
Authentic tasks are ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity.	Problems inherent in the tasks are ill-defined and open to multiple interpretations rather than easily solved by the application of existing algorithms. Learners must identify their own unique tasks and sub-tasks in order to complete the major task.
Authentic tasks comprise complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time.	Tasks are completed in days, weeks and months rather than minutes or hours, requiring significant investment of time and intellectual resources.
Authentic tasks provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources.	The task affords learners the opportunity to examine the problem from a variety of theoretical and practical perspectives, rather than a single perspective that learners must imitate to be successful. The use of a variety of resources rather than a limited number of preselected references requires students to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information.
Authentic tasks provide the opportunity to collaborate.	Collaboration is integral to the task, both within the course and in the real world, rather than achievable by an individual learner.
Authentic tasks provide the opportunity to reflect.	Tasks need to enable learners to make choices and reflect on their learning both individually and socially.

Authentic tasks can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and lead beyond domain-specific outcomes.	Tasks encourage interdisciplinary perspectives and enable diverse roles and expertise rather than a single well-defined field or domain.
Authentic tasks are seamlessly integrated with assessment.	Assessment of tasks is seamlessly integrated with the major task in a manner that reflects real world assessment, rather than separate artificial assessment removed from the nature of the task.
Authentic tasks create polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else.	Tasks culminate in the creation of a whole product rather than an exercise or sub-step in preparation for something else.
Authentic tasks allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome.	Tasks allow a range and diversity of outcomes open to multiple solutions of an original nature, rather than a single correct response obtained by the application of rules and procedures.

Designing authentic assessment requires considerable work prior to the commencement of a course. However, a great deal of this effort can be expected to have ongoing value for future classes, in the form of:

- relationships developed with host organisations
- assessment resources developed for students about the processes, and
- simulation resources developed to replicate authentic settings.

Figure 2: Dimensions of authentic assessment (after Mueller, 2010)

DIMENSION	More traditional assessments	More authentic assessments
Structure of problems	Predetermined	Unpredictable
Learning setting	Contrived	Real
Cognitive activity	Lower-order	Higher-order
Learner agency	Teacher-defined	Learner-defined
Application of learning	Indirect evidence	Direct evidence

Designing authentic assessment involves the following steps:

Determine the broad characteristics of authenticity

- How authentic can the assessment be, in terms of various dimensions of authenticity?
- Some significant characteristics of authenticity, in terms of how it contrasts with more traditional forms of assessment in academic settings such as exams, are set out in Figure 2 above.

Align assessment with the intended learning outcomes

- Ideally, associate learning outcomes that reflect real-world contexts with authentic assessment tasks.
- You may need to revise the assessment plan and/or intended learning outcomes to some extent, to ensure effective alignment.

Design the real-world conditions

This involves describing problems or scenarios, finding placements in authentic settings, or designing a learning environment, taking account of the following:

- Placements in real-world contexts can be high-risk for both the student and those with whom they will interact. Ensure that everyone exercises appropriate duty of care in the preparation and ongoing management of students in these contexts, and recognises the needs of all parties. The more natural the context, the greater the potential risks involved.
- Where placement in a real setting is not possible or desirable, technologies can be exploited to design scenario-

based virtual learning environments in which conditions, characters, circumstances and parameters simulate a real-life context for learning (Herrington et al., 2003).

Ensure that students have the knowledge and skills needed

Ensure that students have the *knowledge and skills* they need to carry out the tasks, that they are *well prepared and equipped* for their engagement in the setting, and that they *understand the assessment requirements*.

For example:

- Are they aware of what a report looks like, in contrast to more academic essays?
- Do they know how to make written or verbal presentations to the public?
- Are they aware of the legal implications of designing a website?
- Do they appreciate the ethical issues involved in reporting their observations?

Highlight the importance of students understanding their roles when engaging in real-world activities

- Students are ambassadors of the university; they should present themselves appropriately within the wider community.
- Students should be well prepared, and behave responsibly and professionally.

Design the assessment task(s)

According to Wiggins (1993), the tasks for assessment should, as much as possible:

- be essential tasks that need to be done in the setting, and not needlessly intrusive
- be enabling, in that they guide students toward more sophisticated use of skills or knowledge
- entail the integration of skills and knowledge contextualised to the authentic setting in all its complexity, rather than being disaggregated to correspond to individual learning outcomes
- depend on the student's own research or use of knowledge
- emphasise higher order reasoning rather than simple recall or description
- be representative rather than comprehensive, giving students the opportunity to probe deeply rather than to gain broad but shallow experience
- be interesting and worthwhile, engaging students' interest and motivation
- revolve around complex, ambiguous or "wicked" problems (problems whose solutions create further problems).

Additionally, authentic assessment tasks ideally will address the needs of an authentic audience (Rule, 2006).

Manage the assessment load

In authentic assessment situations, students may be over-zealous, producing very large portfolios or very long reports. It is important to set limits on the size of the submission, if for no other reason than to manage students' and staff workloads.

For example, if students are to keep journals, have them submit brief periodic reflective statements based on their journals, rather than submitting the journals themselves.

Plan for improved reliability in grading authentic assessment tasks

The more complex the assessment, the more judgment is required from markers, and the greater the need to incorporate reliability measures into the grading process.

- Establish clear assessment criteria
- Include process indicators in assessment criteria, as well as product indicators
- Develop an assessment rubric outlining standards at different grade levels
- Incorporate multiple sources of evidence of student achievement
- When grading, involve others such as host supervisors and marking teams, and students themselves as self- or peer assessors

Develop dialogue between assessors and learners

- Provide opportunities for students to present additional evidence (Hager & Butler, 1996).

Examples of authentic assessment

Students are increasingly being involved in authentic learning and assessment tasks that are typically, but not exclusively, set in such work-integrated contexts as:

- professional education programs
- authentic clinical, production or research contexts
- application and problem solving with preclinical concepts and laboratory work
- professional internships throughout a range of disciplines
- cross-disciplinary integration.

The following examples show the range of activities possible with this form of assessment.

Problem-based learning (PBL)

For an extended period, a team of students evaluate what they know and what they need to learn in order to gain the necessary capacities to respond to a real-world problem or task.

Problem-based learning requires students to work with one another to identify and define problems and to formulate and test hypotheses, searching for and applying theoretical knowledge and skills to new and ill-defined contexts.

Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE)

OSCEs use actors in simulated real-world health problems. Students must observe, diagnose and treat these simulated patients in a limited period. This activity is more individualistic than PBL.

OSCEs are labour-intensive and expensive, but are replicable so that all students are subjected to the same challenges, which is not possible in real clinical contexts.

Scenarios

Scenarios can require students to:

- notice what is important
- explain it using theoretical concepts of the course
- plan and theoretically justify an intervention.

Or they can require students to:

- notice critical factors in a given situation
- investigate the implications and prepare
- present a report for a prescribed audience for a prescribed purpose.

Portfolios

Portfolios require that students

- understand and internalise the learning outcomes of a unit of study, and then
- plan their own set of activities that will generate validated evidence of their performance capability and skill mastery.

The most important feature of the portfolio is the contents-and-commentary page, where the student directs the assessor to particular evidence in relation to specific learning outcomes, to explain and justify the learning achievements.

Designing a solution

Designing a solution to a real community or workplace problem and presenting the solution to its intended audience can be a very engaging activity for students. It can be combined with learning to conduct small-scale research and surveys of contemporary issues that are published in a report for a specific audience.

Analysing "wicked problems" entails considering authentic, complex problems, any solutions to which will create other problems.

Writing for publication

Writing a journal article or short story for publication can be extended to requiring students to form editorial panels, review the work produced and undertake full responsibility for producing a publication, for example, an edited collection of papers.

Staging an exhibition, performance or conference

Events organised by a class group can involve community members, industry experts or professional bodies. They can represent the culmination of a course or program, and expert assessors and judges can be recruited to provide critiques.

Constructing a website

Design and development of a website or other public education resource involves educating a community group about a contemporary issue that students have identified, studied and researched. Not only do students investigate the often conflicting explanations and viewpoints, they also consider the needs and motivations of the community in relation to the issue.

Placements

Workplace or community placements require students to draft, negotiate and establish their own learning outcomes that are congruent with the learning objectives of the unit, and that reflect their context. Students then gather validated evidence that they have achieved the learning outcomes.

Forensic problem-solving

Forensic problems can be set across a range of disciplines. In the sciences, they may be based on scenarios that require students to gather, record and analyse materials for their normal bench work laboratory education. Student groups may have to report or receive findings in relation to another group of students. This requires multiple levels of systematic organisation, teamwork and communication.

Forensic problem-solving can be combined with dramatisations such as court cases, where results and conclusions are argued and defended. In this way, the routine laboratory skills that are learned and developed derive greater meaning from the "big picture" setting and real-life interest established by the scenario.

Case studies

The following video series includes:

- discussion with Dr Kerry Thomas (from COFA) and her students on how she prepares future art teachers through the assessment of performance tasks.
- mini documentary on the use of authentic assessment by the Engineering Faculty's Dr Sami Kara.
- discussion on various aspects of authentic assessment with Dr Patsie Polly from the School of Medical Sciences and Gwyn Jones, Learning Advisor from the UNSW Learning Centre.
- interview with Chris Walker from the School of Social Sciences and International Studies on his use of role play to bring policy theory to life in an extended case study course.

[Videos - Further Aspects of Assessing Authentically](#)

Additional information

External resources

Mueller, J. (2010). [Authentic assessment toolbox](#)

University of Wisconsin, Stout (2007). [Authentic assessment: Online assessment resources for teachers](#)

Further readings

Boud, D. (2000). Sustainable assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education* 22(2), 151–167.

Boud, D. and Falchikov, N. (2005). Redesigning assessment for learning beyond higher education. In A. Brew and C. Asmar (eds), *Research and Development in Higher Education* 28, HERDSA, Sydney, 34–41.

Hager, P and Butler, J. (1996). Two Models of Educational Assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 21(4), 367–378.

Herrington, J., Oliver, R. and Reeves, T. C. (2003). Patterns of engagement in authentic online learning environments. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology* 19(1), 59–71.

Herrington, J., Reeves, T. and Oliver, R. (2010). *A guide to authentic e-learning*. London and New York: Routledge.

Isaacs, G. (1996). *Assessment programs: Characteristics and constraints*. TEDI, University of Queensland.

Journal of Authentic Learning, State University of New York at Oswego.

Lombardi, M. & Oblinger, D. (2008). [Making the Grade: The Role of Assessment in Authentic Learning](#), ELI Paper 1, EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative.

Rule, A. C. (2006). Editorial: The Components of Authentic Learning. *Journal of Authentic Learning* 3(1), 1–10.

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Appendix

Dr Patsy Pollie and Gwyn Jones

Designing and Scaffolding an Authentic Research Task

Gwyn Jones: Well, to design the task was really about deconstructing what the students needed for written tasks. What do they do in pathology? So that's when I would yell at Pats and we would say, "What does a pathologist really need? What writing skills do they need?" And that's when we came up with the—

Dr Patsy Pollie: The role of the researcher—

Gwyn: Well, actually the media assignment—

Patsy: —and the media assignment, because they had to take on the role of the researcher in order to accomplish that assignment. Now, pathology has many different aspects, but what I've come in to do is teach content, of course, but also bring in a research flavour to it. So the media assignment was interesting in that it was designed such that the student take ownership, and what we did was we asked the student to take a topic from the media—so it could have been a disease outbreak, a cure for cancer, something like this. So it had a pathology theme to it but the student chose their own topic and then designed a question, a research question, about that topic, and then the rest of the assessment flowed. So we had very guided research, well, criteria for the research assignment that the students adhered to, but the topic itself was their own topic. So there was a structure or framework that we had designed together but the topic was their own and that's the whole individual aspect of the writing task.

Gwyn: And the key to this that there was a transparent criteria for not only the students but the tutors, as well. So the skills focus then supported the tutors and supported the students, so they were in a position to help each other. And that transparent criteria, I think, has been one of the items in the assessment that allows the tutors to have a conversation with the students, so it's not a mystery thing, it's actually out there very, very exposed, and they know how to structure it within a creative framework, but they can choose their own topics—

Patsy: —choose their own topics. So, in addition to that, we support that development. So we have 3 skills workshops and students attend that; they get the feedback; they have the opportunity to ask us questions on how to go about doing the task. There are follow-up meetings with tutors to get them enabled for marking, for example, get them on the same page in terms of what the skills focus can offer the students, in addition to how it can support them when they are marking it. That's more or less the way we've framed it, so, support structure for the students and for the tutors, so it becomes this big community of support, all on the same page, all using the same criteria, by the way, not only us, the tutors, the students, and ... it works.

Gwyn: Well, the scaffolding is actually is designed within, embedded within the program, and a lot of the support lectures are scaffolded progressively. We start early; we have a dream the students too will start early; that's our dream. And some do, some are fantastic. Of course, some of the students wait to the very end. And that's exactly how a lot of people function, so that's fine. The scaffolding is then engaged in their second year, for example, when they come into the role of the researcher is established in our second year with them. The third year they're seeing that same role, but they're extending it from a script and a process into a group task where they present, so they're actually writing about their processes, but they're presenting the processes in an oral way. And then when they come to their honours years, everything just slots in, 'cause they're doing their thesis, they're doing their oral presentations, and I continue to work with them—independently, actually. They come in groups, but you always, they select if, are the ones that want to come for continued support in their

honours year. So we scaffold it, really, through those 3 years, and they're kind of, on their own by the time they get to honours.

Benefits of Authentic Assessment through Student Research Tasks

Dr Patsy Pollie: They're able to work and talk like research scientists, quite comfortably, very easily, no dramas involved in stressful situations. They're very comfortable in that skin, all of a sudden, and their expectations are very ... real.

Gwyn Jones: I think what is really, really interesting is when you get comments that are based on, "No one ever asked me to be a researcher before. And I really had fun. But it's very frustrating 'cause it takes a lotta time." And I think that's fantastic, 'cause that student has grabbed the whole idea that they're in control of this. It's empowered them, and I think this is one aspect of the feedback we do get, is that the students that get it are empowered by it, and they certainly take it on to their honours year, and it certainly has been highlighted in a lot of the honours presentations. The students who have had this training and support in pathology in their third year stand out from the other guys who haven't had the same kind of support. So that kind of embedding, I think, has really paid off.

Patsy: We're now facing the situation where academics and researchers are finding it—their presentations are very hard to mark, and their project manuscripts thesis hard to mark, because everything has been done to a T, all the boxes are sort of ticked—and beyond, in terms of the communication. So we feel like it's made a difference in the way they, deal with their tasks, communicate. They're empowered. They're just able, they're ready to do it and they're operating at a researcher's standard that's been out there for about 3 to 5 years already.

Gwyn: Yes, the levels—since we started this the levels in their writing tasks, their presentation tasks, have raised, and it was really funny because one of the tutors at our monitoring meeting was saying, "But look, some of these guys are getting 75 and 80s!" And I said, "Yeah, hopefully they will all get 75." And they should. You know, we should be there supporting these guys that make the effort and certainly in the presentation, their SOMS honours presentations now are such a standard, they are at a professional conference standard, which certainly wasn't the case 5 years ago. It's about engaging with everything that is good academic practice and they realise, "Oh, that's good, I can take that to another course." So it's quite transferable and it certainly has been noticed in other courses these guys are taking. And it's now starting to actually be recognised and utilised within the other streams as well, some of these strategies. So, yeah, it's about the learning, it's about the learning as opposed to the pathology, it's the learning of the pathology.

Patsy: They're very happy as they start to, especially in the honours year, when they realise that this is all for a serious reason, you know, to get their honours grades in the end, but also the lifelong approach to coming into a PhD in research, coming into a research assistant position in research, but they're all skills that are used constantly. And I wish someone had taught me. We learnt by fire, and that was okay for that time, but the thing that drove this interaction as a starting point was like, "Why didn't I get this? This is so good." And the students are so thankful by the end of it because they realise that that early intervention at second year has paid off at the end.

Gwyn: But do you know what I think is the biggest thing for these guys, is they come up with the realisation that "Oh my God, this is developmental. I can continue strengthening these skills. These are skills I can actually play with. These academic literacy things, they're soft stuff, but I can play with them, and I can continue to develop." And I see that in the honours because I get emails, "Can I come in? I need a little bit of brushing up in this." So they have come away with a recognition that they are, that they do have the power to continue strengthening their own learning. Which is just the happiest news. And it really doesn't have much to do with the marks. At all. It is seeing these guys take this mantle. And then also seeing these students wanting to be tutors, on the program. So there's kind of, "Can I? Can I be a tutor, please? Can I?"

Patsy: They want heavy involvement, 'cause they see where it's heading.

Gwyn: Which is great. And now we have very well-informed, and very well-skilled tutors. So these kids are getting really valuable feedback, because now it's legitimate, enculturated, fabulous pathologists talking to baby pathologists. So it's kind of exciting, I think.

Patsy: It is. I think we've finally gotten to the point where the soft stuff's becoming hard stuff.

Gwyn: [laughs] Yes!

Patsy: Real stuff.

Gwyn: There's a quote from a medical student I worked with. He says, "I had no idea all that soft stuff was soooo important!" 'Cause the scientists see hard stuff as the thing.

Patsy: The data.

Gwyn: Yes.

Patsy: Rather than communicating it. Which is what it's all about.

Authentic Assessment through Collaboration

Dr Patsy Pollie: The tutors are very important so what we have asked the students to do is engage in this conversation, as Gwyn has already pointed out, but in the group format, so they're already in their research teams as part of the course itself and learning content, but as part of that team they feedback on each other so they have this whole network of thinking all of a sudden, and then they bounce that with the tutors rather than coming to us each time. Okay, they do initially and then they recognise that the tutors are very integral in terms of the way they are developing their thinking, and they realise, they value that the tutors are actual researchers at the moment so they go to them.

Gwyn Jones: There is also the collaboration that starts right at their first encounter and that whole concept of establishing, when you have multiple authors in science it's a group task so from the offset that "groupness" is in a sense in our first encounter with the written task. They have a research group that they work with within their tutor group so it's not a formal grouping as such for the assignment, 'cause that assignment is an individual task. The second year when they're doing their oral presentation, that is a group presentation, where they do their research as a group, so the written task is a group effort. They then negotiate their script, and then they collectively present it. So it's one voice, but a multiple group. And then that is very much similar to what they have to do in their labs, and when they get into their honours years, and further on to the research. So I think that collaboration is another incredibly important aspect, of the research teams, of the collaborative nature of the assignments, because they don't work unless they work together.

Authentic Assessment through Student Based Learning

Dr Patsy Pollie: ... university students doing pathology were not able to present their work clearly or communicate their work clearly in a written format, and it was also the case for oral communication. So the learning outcomes that I found that were going to need development were communication, both in the written and oral format.

So we set about putting in assessment tasks, or actually modifying pre-existing assessment tasks, to make them more dynamic rather than static, giving students ownership of their role in pathology, and, most specifically, coming into more of a research focus, because that's the way the Faculty of Medicine was heading and we tailored some of the assessment tasks such that they would address those learning outcomes and capabilities. So all of a sudden these students came from being very static researchers to being very active and dynamic researchers and taking on that role. So, yes, we started with honours students and thinking, "Why can't these guys communicate? Why can't they do this stuff?" And then we figured we'd assess them and integrate tasks early on, second year, into third year with the idea that they would become enabled, ready, ready to go, for honours. So that was the premise of what we started with.

So the relationship with the Learning Centre and specifically Gwyn was that I recognised that Gwyn had very specific sort of traits in communication, and talent in bringing out those, also, those traits in students. So she was a very keen learning adviser who was interested in developing student attributes like communication. I'd met Gwyn through a colleague and I figured, "Well, I need this person on board, to assist me." Coming in from a research environment, I knew how to do it, but how was I going to get my students to do it? And Gwyn had that experience.

So what we've managed to do was merge our backgrounds and our roles, and we've become quite an interesting unit now. Rather than two people working in separation we work together and in tandem.

Gwyn Jones: What we do is just talk to each other, and find out, and help work through solutions. In a sense the Learning Centre—well, I like to see myself as a little Bunnings person, because there are strategies often you can engage to support and embed these literacies that are contextualised, and if they're contextualised, and they have a need, if students need something, they'll use them. [Patsy: Of course.] So if you have an assessment, and you have a need to do that assessment well, and you have all the tools to help them, it's magic. And so, sometimes I work full-time in the Learning Centre, sometimes you pop in and pop out ...

I think the most successful pattern is embedment, so you embed it throughout your course. [Patsy: Which has worked for us.] So we come in, we sort of [whispers] silently do things, and then we back off because it's already embedded all through the program.

So, anybody can give us a ring, and chat through and maybe we can help, in any way, shape or form.

Dr Kerry Thomas

Authentic Assessment as Performance

STRATEGY—BUILD DESIRE

Dr Kerry Thomas: Teaching's all about building desire. So how do you build desire for the things that you think are important? I used to talk to the kids about fishing: I want to catch you; I want to bring you in; you want to do that with the kids. The worst thing that could happen would be if the kids don't take the bait, if I can't catch you—because this is the sort of thing you want to be caught by. But the kids have to be ready to be caught. So what can you do to make things attractive for the catching to take place?

And part of my way of getting to that was to actually look at what happened with expert teachers and then bring that into the discussions in the classroom for what was possible for these students as prospective teachers.

Arts student Melanie Crawford: We were all ... we were all, just—

Arts student Stan Toohey: Totally engaged.

Melanie Crawford: Yeah, and we wanted to be there, and we wanted to do well.

PREPARING STUDENTS TO BECOME TEACHERS

Dr Kerry Thomas: The focus in the course is on communication and language. And so, the whole idea is the students begin to think about what it is to teach, beyond just the delivery of content or that initial identity as a teacher.

In other words, they begin to really think about what's that relationship like with students for learning to take place.

Melanie Crawford: It's vitally important for our development professionally to be prepared to be in a classroom, in front of a class, to be confident and, yeah, I guess, just, to know what we need in order to be put in that situation on a day-to-day basis. If we don't get that in university, then it's a very steep learning curve when you get out there, almost too steep, in a way. You need the practice.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Dr Kerry Thomas: I wanted them to take, in the second assignment, a view of an art work, and then compare that view with another view. And they would take on, they would represent, different points of view about the art work. Some took on the role of artists; I have this fabulous video of a student who becomes Salvador Dali and compares it to another position. I've had other students who've taken on roles of critics. I've had students who have taken on roles of curators in an exhibition in another language as well as their own language. So you're really trying to get this whole idea of, "This is the work, this is the work that we want to focus on and they choose that. But how could you actually represent different points of view about this work?"

In the third assignment they had to do a little teaching performance. We would pick up on issues to do with questioning, listening, discussion, building stories, providing that vicarious experience as I spoke of, and really thinking about how the students are part of what is enacted through that authority being enacted.

Stan Toohey: You don't have the option of brushing things under the carpet. You know, these things—if you're going to have problems in the future, you'll see where those problems are going to lie at that point, in that safe environment.

Kerry Thomas: So they had between 10 and 15 as their class, and the other 10 to 15 looked on. So what I was trying to do there was to model the idea of cultivating that judgment of the teacher in the evaluation that others gave, while half the

class were the class. And then we flipped this around from student to student, so these performances were done in the classroom.

Stan Toohey: Because you're up there and you're, sort of, your head's full of what you're going to do next, you don't really stop to think, "How's this going?" So you get—there it is, recorded on film—how people are enjoying or not enjoying the process, and, you hear their banter, you know, you just overhear comments. So that was really good, I thought.

THE CHALLENGES

Dr Kerry Thomas: Only when you stop thinking you know, that we can start to do something about building what you know, because your knowing as a high-school student won't be the thing that makes you a good teacher. Even though that was the thing that got you here and made you want to do this, that's not the thing that will make you a good teacher. So how can we turn that around?

Melanie Crawford: There was an assignment where we had to film ourselves, with an audience, in character. And then we had to submit that in some form.

Stan Toohey: And how many people just did not want the class to see it? They were quite willing for Kerry to take it away—

Melanie Crawford: Yeah, to hand it in...

Stan Toohey: I was thinking to myself, "This is nothing! You're going to be in front of these glaring eyes; you're going to be scanned—"

Melanie Crawford: The snippets we saw of people's films were brilliant. They just had great ideas—

Stan Toohey: I know! And these are the people who were embarrassed! Some of them were embarrassed and I just thought, "Why? That was so well done! Don't be embarrassed about it." But—Anyway, I think she sort of knocked that out of them.

Melanie Crawford: Yeah.

THE BENEFITS

Dr Kerry Thomas: There are immediate benefits in thinking about the performative role of the teacher and the kind of subtlety that is transacted between teachers and students in those social relations in the classroom. And then, secondly, that this is something that is something which is absolutely critical for their development and professional practice as teachers.

Melanie Crawford: It's more practical, and we're practical, I mean, being Arts students, we're more...

Stan Toohey: There's more of theory.

Melanie Crawford: So an exercise like that, to me, feels so much more achievable, and exciting.

Stan Toohey: It was fun.

Melanie Crawford: Rather than having to sit down and write another 2000-word essay. You walk away from a semester of a course like that and you know you've learnt something, and you know you've changed, and you'll never forget it.