



Authentic Assessment

What is the issue?

More authentic approaches to assessment can have benefits for student learning and student success. Authentic assessment can reinforce that ongoing effort and mastery over time are crucial to success, and that university-level study often requires valued, deep and incremental approaches to learning. If you are being asked to undertake meaningful tasks, you may feel more engaged with your learning and adopt deep rather than surface approaches (Ramsden, 2003). With authentic approaches to learning you may be more likely to see the relevance of what you are doing to your future life and self, and therefore be more motivated to work hard. In some cases, authentic assessment can even put joy into the assessment process (MacArthur, 2022).



Understanding authentic assessment

Authentic assessment tries to make assessment tasks feel meaningful, worthwhile and valuable to students (MacArthur 2021) beyond just picking up marks.

Using assessment formats that are much more like the ‘real things’ that academics or professionals in the field do has the power to engage students in much more meaningful ways. Authentic assessment also helps to develop your sense of becoming a member of a discipline or professional community.



A sense of 'realism' is a key characteristic (Villarroel et al., 2018) and many features of authentic assessment clearly link to employability (Sokhanvar et al., 2021). Thus, authentic assessment can boost your sense that you are learning to be work-ready. However, the principle of authenticity can be much broader than this where you have the feeling of developing identity by completing an assessment which feels personally relevant to you and your interests (Davison, 2011), or seems faithful to the discipline (Sambell et al., 2013). In this manner, assessment can shape your 'identity and sense of self-worth ... [where] it's about who [you] are and who [you] go on to be in our society' (McArthur, 2021, p.8).

What can you do?

- ✓ Research the experiential learning opportunities that are available on campus.
- ✓ If you have some choice in your university assignments, consider using it to engage in work which is meaningful for you.
- ✓ Explore with your lecturers if longer assessments (final year projects, theses, capstones) could match your interests and/or reflect the profession you wish to join after university.
- ✓ Make connections between your university programme, what and how you are learning, and who you want to become. Reflect on how you might use or apply your learning beyond the university.





About this resource

As part of the Maynooth University Assess for Success initiative international experts Kay Sambell and Sally Brown developed staff guides on a number of topics in which Maynooth University colleagues expressed particular interest. Inspired by the staff guides, we worked with Kay and Sally to develop student guides on the same topics. All five guides can be accessed in Maynooth University's Assessment and Feedback Hub.

References:

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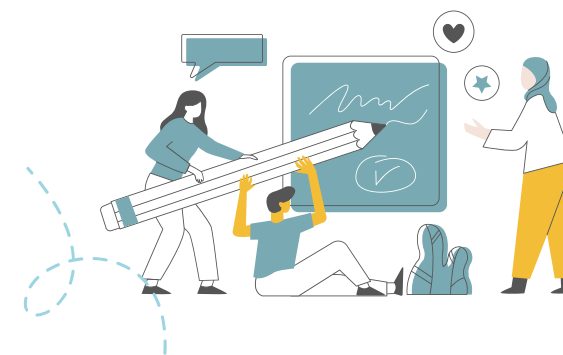
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