Elearning assessment methods
How to assess fairly in digital spaces?
Name, date, location

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Module content

This module is divided into three parts:

- PART I: Theoretical approaches to questions of equity in assessment

- PART II: A participatory/interactive session on assessment methods in practice: working on scenarios in groups

- PART III: A self-assessment survey on assessment practices

Learning goals

At the end of the module, you will:

- Acknowledge the theoretical underpinnings of equity and inclusion in (digital) assessment (PART I of the module)

- Apply knowledge of these theories in your own contexts (PART II of the module)

- Synthesise & evaluate: be able to make informed decisions to improve inclusiveness in digital assessment in their institutions (PART III of the module)

PART I

Acknowledge the theoretical underpinnings of equity and inclusion in (digital) assessment

Universal Design Assessment Principles

- Inclusive assessment population

- Precisely defined constructs

- Accessible, non-biased items

- Amenable to accommodations

- Simple, clear, and intuitive instructions and procedures

- Maximum readability and comprehensibility

- Maximum legibility

Inclusive Assessment Population 1/2

- Higher education institutions (HEI) need to remove barriers that may prevent students from performing to the full potential.
- Need to consider not only students with different (dis)abilities, but also other potentially vulnerable populations.
- Inclusive assessment population refers to the necessity of creating assessments that are not only accessible but also reflective of a diverse student population (NCEO).

Inclusive Assessment Population 2/2

- HEIs should assess their current practices and whether they may hinder diversity in their institutions.
- Institutions need to commit to maintaining inclusivity within their digital assessments, for instance through different monitoring mechanisms (Bearman et al., 2022).
- The creation of an inclusive assessment population necessitates a proactive approach from HEIs. This may include staff training.

Precisely Defined Constructs 1/2

- Clearly defined course content and learning goals are crucial for student success in higher education.
- Clarity reduces ambiguity and stress, allowing students to focus on learning (Nieminen, 2022).
- HEIs should employ precise language in assessment guidelines and leverage digital features that cater to diverse learning preferences.
- Instead of lengthy written assignments, students can demonstrate their skills by submitting video presentations, audio recordings, or interactive digital portfolios.

Precisely Defined Constructs 2/2

- Implementation choices, such as assessment format, technology use, and task design, can influence the validity of the assessment outcomes.
- The connection between assessment design and construct definition is vital for creating fair and inclusive assessment environments.
- Evaluation rubrics are good in explicitly outlining performance criteria for each task (Tai et al., 2022).
- By ensuring that assessment criteria are clear and accessible, educators help students work toward these benchmarks while establishing a common understanding of success.

Accessible, non-biased items 1/2

- Accessible items allow students with diverse needs to engage fully with assessment materials (NCEO, n.d.).
- Non-biased items aim to eliminate stereotypes or assumptions that could disadvantage specific groups, providing a level playing field for all learners.
- HEIs need to critically review evaluation materials to ensure that they do not inadvertently reinforce cultural stereotypes or privilege the cultural norms of a particular group.

Accessible, non-biased items 2/2

- Accessibility considerations must be integrated into assessment design from the outset.
- This involves utilizing flexible formats that can accommodate a range of learner preferences and needs.
- Using clear and straightforward language, free of jargon, helps mitigate misunderstandings and enhances overall accessibility.
- HEIs should acknowledge that significant numbers of students have suffered trauma, which impacts their learning in many ways.
- To support students with trauma, assessment should be designed to minimise anxiety and allow for flexibility.

Reflection

- Think of use of language/use of concepts in teaching situation that is…
  - accessible and non-biased
  - inaccessible and biased

Amenable to accommodations 1/2

- This principle refers to digital assessment methods that are responsive to diverse learner needs.
- In digital assessment, the focus shifts towards creating flexible assessment formats and utilizing various platforms that allow for a wide range of adaptations to meet student needs.
- Different tools, such as translation tools and text-to-speech capabilities, have enhanced accessibility and flexibility.
- Such flexibility in the design and delivery of assessment fosters an inclusive learning environment.

Amenable to accommodations 2/2

- Recent research suggests a re-evaluation of the traditional centrality of instructors in the creation and implementation of digital assessment.

- Instead of instructor-led design and implementation, a shift towards co-creation and negotiation with students may give way to a more equitable assessment landscape.

- Participatory Open Educational Recourse (OER) production aligns closely with this vision of co-creation, as it emphasizes collaboration between educators and learners in resource development (Braßler, 2024).

- Student engagement fosters a sense of ownership over their learning experiences, challenging the perceived standard of a one-size-fits-all approach.

Simple, clear, and intuitive instructions and procedures 1/2

- This principle ensures that students understand tasks and evaluation criteria without ambiguity.
- Assessment must articulate clear objectives and criteria, as it is unfair to evaluate students without a comprehensive understanding of what is expected from them (NCEO, n.d.).
- HEIs should focus on detailing what students are being assessed on by clearly presenting knowledge, skills, and competences.
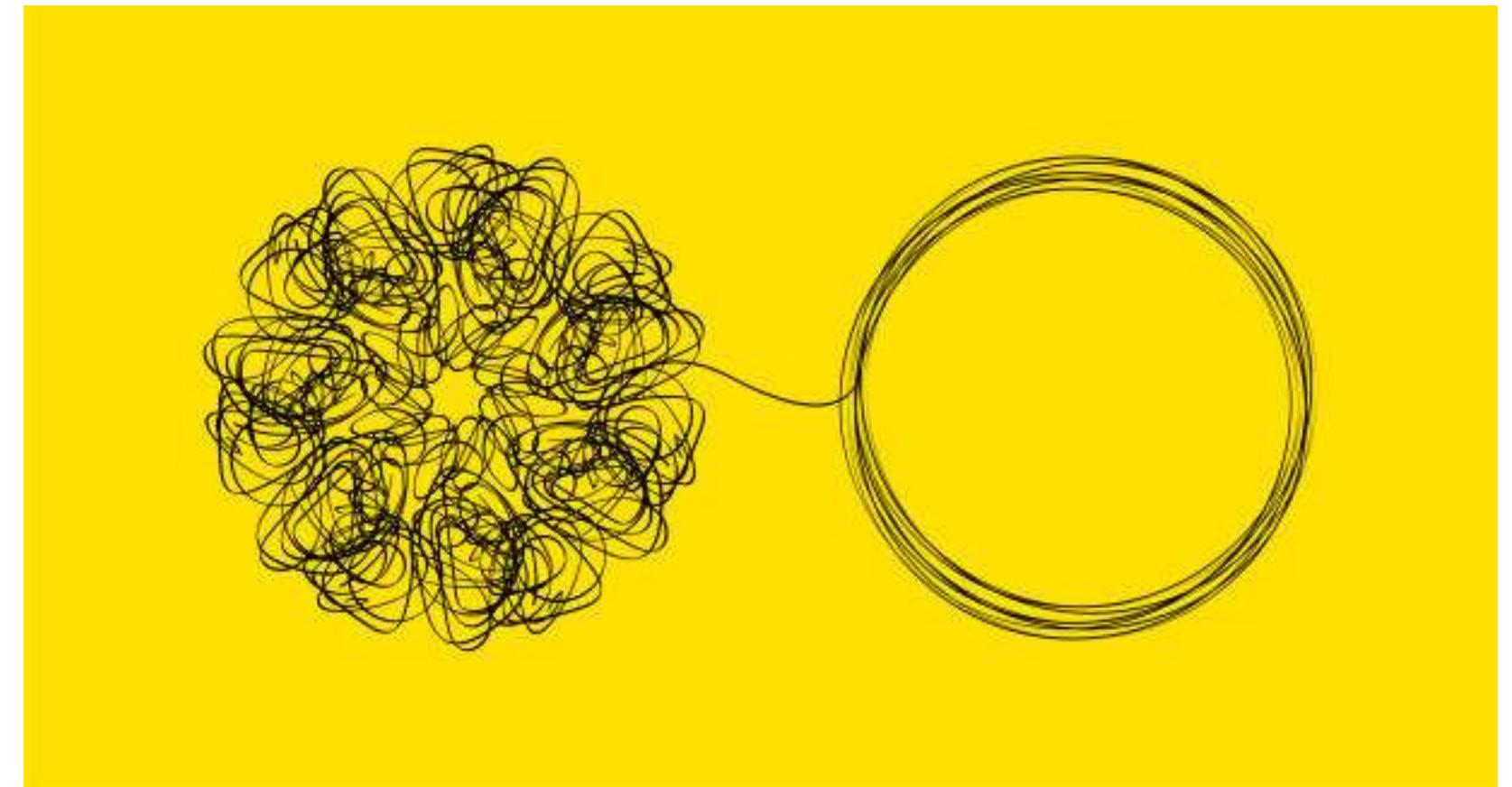
Simple, clear, and intuitive instructions and procedures 2/2

- The use of visual aids, flowcharts, and examples that illustrate expectations for tasks can further clarify digital assessment expectations.
- Such comprehensibility is particularly crucial for potentially marginalized groups, who may already be coping with various barriers in their educational experience.
- Rubrics are essential tools in this context, as they offer explicit criteria for performance evaluation. By outlining what constitutes different levels of achievement, rubrics provide transparency and help students more effectively prepare for assessments (Tai et al., 2022).

Maximum readability and comprehensibility + Maximum legibility 1/2

- These principles are essential in fostering inclusion within digital assessment in higher education.
- These principles advocate for creating assessment materials that are not only accessible but also easy to understand and navigate for all students.
- In the context of digital assessments, maximum readability and comprehensibility involve the use of clear language, straightforward instructions, and a logical structure that promotes ease of understanding.

Maximum readability and comprehensibility + Maximum legibility 1/2

- Maximum legibility refers to the visual presentation of assessment materials, ensuring that content is presented in formats that enhance readability. This includes choosing appropriate fonts, sizes, and color contrasts that make text easy to read on digital screens.
- Incorporating these principles into digital assessments not only supports inclusion but also enriches the learning experience for all students.
- When assessment materials are designed to be easily readable and legible, students can devote their cognitive resources to demonstrating knowledge and skills rather than struggling to decipher complex instructions or poorly formatted documents

Reflection

As a learner or a teacher, have you had experiences of particularly clear and simple instructions of course assignments? Or of unclear and confusing instructions?

Other aspects to consider

- In addition to the UDA Principles, there are other important aspects to consider. These are:

- Technical infrastrcture

- Variety in assessment

- Feedback

- Monitoring and continuous improvement

Technical infrastructure 1/2

- A robust and well-designed digital infrastructure ensures that all students can engage effectively with assessment materials.

- However, the existence of a digital divide remains a substantial challenge, as historical disparities in access to technology and digital literacy can impact student performance even when institutions provide equal access at the institutional level.

- To bridge this gap, HEIs must invest in technologically appropriate enhancements rather than simply replacing traditional methods with digital ones.

Technical infrastructure 2/2

- This means enhancing existing education practices with technology that complements and supports diverse learning styles and assessment needs.

- For instance, providing self-paced learning modules for students to 'catch-up' on missing knowledge and integrating assistive technologies such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, and alternative input devices to provide crucial support for differently-abled students, enabling all learners to navigate assessments more effectively.

- It is vital for institutions to prioritize user-friendly, reliable, and secure platforms for digital assessments. These platforms should be intuitive, allowing students to navigate assessment materials effortlessly and access necessary accommodations without confusion.

- Training and support on the use of these platforms should also be readily available.

Variety 1/2

- Research emphasizes the need for a diverse range of assessment formats, enabling students of all abilities and backgrounds to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in multiple ways.
- Incorporating variety promotes inclusivity by allowing all students to utilize their strengths and learning preferences.
- It is important for instructors to ensure that these varied assessment tasks are aligned with the target content and skills of the course.
- Variety also enhances the authenticity of assessments.

Variety 2/2

Examples of potential digital assessments in higher education

- Interactive quizzes

- Portfolio Assessment

- Multimedia Presentations

- Discussion Boards

- Peer Review

- Self-Assessments

- Experiential Learning Projects

- Flexibility in Timing

- Authentic Assessments

- Utilization of Analytics

Reflection

Students have different access to technology. Some do not have their own laptop or their Wifi connection is poor. What kind of digital tools would suit them?

Feedback 1/2

- Delivering timely and constructive feedback helps students understand their performance, identify areas for improvement, and reinforce their learning.
- In digital assessments, the immediacy of feedback can greatly enhance student engagement and motivation.
- Providing feedback that is closely aligned with learning objectives helps students connect their performance to the targets of the course, making the learning experience more relevant and purposeful.

Feedback 2/2

- Feedback in digital assessments should not only be viewed as an endpoint but as a part of an ongoing dialogue between instructors and students. Engaging students in self-assessment and peer feedback can empower them to take ownership of their learning.

- Feedback also plays a critical role in assessment for inclusion, as it allows instructors to identify which students may be struggling and why. By analyzing patterns in feedback, educators can tailor their instruction to better meet the needs of diverse learners.

- Meaningful feedback can reinforce the application of knowledge in real-world contexts, enhancing the authenticity of assessments. When assessments are designed to reflect practical scenarios, feedback can guide students in understanding the relevance of their learning to professional practice.

Monitoring and continuous improvement 1/2

- For institutions that strive to enhance educational experiences for all students, adopting a systematic approach to monitoring and quality control is crucial.

- Embedding continuous improvement into the development cycles allows institutions to proactively address emerging needs and make the most of opportunities within their learning environments.

- Effective monitoring entails a thorough evaluation of both the design and implementation of digital assessments, focusing on their impact on student learning outcomes.

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Monitoring and continuous improvement 2/2

- Incorporating continuous improvement into the assessment development cycle is essential.
- This requires regularly reviewing assessment practices and making adjustments based on feedback and outcomes rather than viewing diversity initiatives as a one-time effort.
- When institutions prioritize ongoing monitoring and enhancement, they create an environment where inclusive practices are continually refined and tailored to meet the diverse needs of their student populations.
- This iterative process ensures that assessments remain relevant and aligned with both evolving educational goals and the diverse needs of the student population (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2020).

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Do you have any questions?

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Thank you!

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