

Designing for Learning

Rethinking Assessment for Equity and Inclusivity



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND



**Emma Sadera LTU, FMHS
CLear Fellow 2020**

Abstract

Inequity and exclusion in tertiary education are barriers to student participation, learning, and success. Those barriers can emerge from structural issues, such as lack of access, disability, socioeconomic status, and learning culture. They can also arise because of the history and values of higher education, assumptions of values, norms and knowledge hierarchies that are privileged and reproduced in how we teach.

In short, assessment is 'neither value-neutral nor culture-free.'³ To truly reach and enable learning for diverse student populations, particularly those traditionally marginalised or excluded, we must rethink our practices and challenge the assumptions that underpin them. Assessment is key to this, as it is fundamental to the learning process (being both part of and the demonstration of learning). Developments in learning spaces and practices, including in technologies also open up options to rethink assessment orthodoxies. Informed by notions including academic cultural capital,¹ connoissance,^{1,5} liberatory pedagogy,² a social justice approach incorporating UDL and CSP,³ and engaged pedagogy,⁴ this project aimed to interrogate methods and means of assessment used at the University of Auckland in order to develop recommendations of alternative assessment practices for teachers to implement.

Effects of 2020:

My initial plans underwent dramatic revision in Semester 1 2020 as a result of changes to our departmental structure, the university hiring freeze, and the effects of the pandemic on mine and colleagues teaching workloads. I was unable to conduct the study of staff and students that I had planned, and to work with colleagues to redesign assessment on their courses to trial inclusive assessment practices aligned with the relevant literature base. I had to rapidly reconsider the steps I could take and the order in which I could take them.

Related/emergent projects:

I am engaged on a number of projects emerging from my CLear Fellowship work.

Interdisciplinary transnational pedagogic wellbeing study: From connecting with a visiting scholar from the University of Leeds, UK, undertaking a fellowship project with some shared areas of interest (A/P Bridgette Berwick), I am now a CI on a comparative study of pedagogic wellbeing in curricula in the two institutions, working with colleagues from across UoA to develop a tailored question set which recognises our disciplinary and cultural contexts (for example, ako and indigenous knowledges).

A particular connection with my Fellowship project is the inclusion in the survey question set of an instrument measuring academic cultural capital. This is underway at UoL and will be circulated at UoA in early semester 2, 2021.

UDL in Higher Education project group: From dissemination of my Fellowship project work and seminars, I was invited to join a cross-faculty working group (led by Professor Missy Morton (FEDSW)) exploring the integration of Universal Design for Learning in course design and teaching practice for enabling equity for staff and students with disabilities.



How can you get involved?

If you are interested in:

- * joining the mailing list for the seminar series,
- * showcasing work you are doing to rethink assessment at one of the seminars,
- * trialling other approaches to inclusive assessment in your teaching,

please email me at e.sadere@auckland.ac.nz

1 Outputs:

Initial literature review: I have conducted a brief initial literature review and explored relevant practise and theoretical frameworks; this would be expanded with the planned- for RA support. However, this enabled me to identify a range of good practice approaches and perspectives to inform my subsequent interventions.

2

Rethinking assessment for inclusivity seminar series (6 seminars to date): Speakers from around the University and internationally have presented online seminars on practice and scholarship in a range of areas of inclusive, equitable assessment. As part of this, I have created an opt-in mailing list of a network of interested colleagues from across the university and several from other institutions (63 members to date).

Participants in these seminars/workshops have contributed key thoughts and takeaways, which will be compiled as part of the eventual project recommendations. This series is ongoing, and I am in discussion with several more potential presenters. All sessions have been recorded and are available for colleagues to watch.

The seminars have brought new practices and perspectives to a cross-faculty, cross-disciplinary UoA audience, and the feedback and engagement from participants at these seminars has been extremely positive. In putting together these seminars, I have begun fruitful collaborative conversations with influential teacher-scholars and created an international network.

Seminars and Presenters

1

Rethinking assessment for inclusivity



Emma Sadera, Teri Ko,
Dr Peter Smith
(University of Auckland)

2

Workshop on designing 'socially just' assessment



Dr Pauline Hanesworth
(SRUC, UK)

3

Rubrics as invitational: a new metaphor for assessment criteria (workshop)



Professor Margaret Bearman
(Deakin University, Australia)

4

Inclusive assessment: the forgotten element of inclusive pedagogy?



Dr Georgina Blakeley
(University of Huddersfield, UK)

5

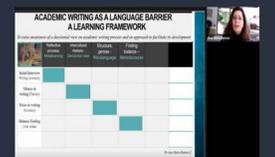
Patchwork and Creative Assessment



Emma Sadera,
Dr Tanisha Jowsey
(University of Auckland)

6

Inclusive assessment and academic writing: lessons from the field



Dr Ana Maria Benton Z
(University of Auckland)

Case Study: Patchwork Assessment

Dr Maxine Lewis (Senior Lecturer, Classics and Ancient History) After the difficulties of teaching during 2020, Maxine had sought out the inclusive assessment seminar series to explore alternative assessment strategies that would facilitate meaningful and inclusive learning for her students. Maxine contacted me after my seminar on the patchwork assessment approach, as she was interested in implementing this methodology.

We met a number of times to discuss applying this assessment method to two of her courses and I was able to offer guidance and advice in developing assessments and rubrics. Maxine trialled patchwork assessment in two courses in Semester 1 2021 (ANCIENT 110/G and LATIN 305), and is planning to continue exploring this approach in Semester 2.

This rethinking of assessment strategies in order to make the course assessments more inclusive and equitable, and more meaningful as learning experiences, was a successful initial implementation of my intended outcome of working with colleagues too.

Conclusion:

As for all the 2020 Fellows, the limitations and constraints experienced over 2020 significantly impacted on the project plan I originally had. However, I am proud of the substantive outputs I was able to achieve, and appreciative of all those who contributed and participated.

I will continue this work, and intend to return to some of my original plans for a study of staff and student experiences of I am excited about the strong foundations I have created and the developing network of UoA colleagues who are interested in rethinking their assessment practices for inclusivity, equity and diversity.

As Hanesworth et al note, 'there is an ethical imperative to re-envision how organisations address assessment policies and processes that replicate wider social inequities.'³

References

- 1 Pierre Bourdieu & Jean Claude Passeron (1990) *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*, ed. / preface by Pierre Bourdieu, Sage in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Dept. of Administrative and Social Studies, Teesside Polytechnic.
- 2 Paolo Freire (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- 3 Pauline Hanesworth, Seán Bracken & Sam Elkington (2019) *A typology for a social justice approach to assessment: learning from universal design and culturally sustaining pedagogy*, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 24:1, 98-114.
- 4 bell hooks (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge.
- 5 Josephine Mirador (2014) 'I'd like to know why': cultural capital and MA in education students' interpretation of feedback commentaries, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39:6, 715-728.

The terms 'inclusive' and 'equitable' are used here to frame an approach which opens access and participation to all learners, recognises the diversity of knowledge and expertise held by learners, and which seeks to reconsider traditional or privileged assumptions about what assessment 'should' look like.

What next:

- Continuation of the seminar series: the series will continue to bring the work of scholars and practitioners to the developing UoA network.
- Further patchwork assessment trials and evaluations. Further engagement with and redesign of colleagues' assessment practices.
- Exploration of alternative approaches, including the notion of pleasure in the classroom and relaxed pedagogy.
- Staff and student survey of existing experiences of assessment.