

Title: **Demystifying assessment criteria to enhance students' understanding and achievement in higher education**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Describe and critique activities undertaken by students at Newman University College in relation to assessment criteria
- Assess the impact of activities undertaken in relation to assessment
- Discuss the approach taken to 'demystifying' assessment criteria
- Compare this approach to ones taken at their institution
- Reflect upon whether this approach could work at their institution

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

- Engaging students with assessment criteria
- Identifying problematic assessment criteria
- Addressing assessment criteria in different ways to enhance understanding
- Evaluating approaches taken

In their second year of an Initial Teacher Education course the students are faced with a double assignment, linked to inclusion and assessment, based upon their experiences in secondary schools, with twelve very wordy assessment criteria. This differs significantly from their experiences to date and other assignments which they are faced with. There is an additional complication in that the assignment is not submitted until five months after their taught sessions end.

This research focussed on how staff teaching on the course, attempted to engage the students with the assessment criteria from the start of the module. The students were audited to ascertain what they did with assessment criteria, if anything and why. Additionally the twelve criteria for the assignment were presented to them and they indicated those they were confident with/unsure of/unconfident with. Those criteria in the latter two categories were addressed in taught sessions. A variety of methods were used to 'explore' the criteria. At the end of the teaching block a further audit was carried out to ascertain understanding of individual criteria. Students were also asked which of the individual methods enhanced their understanding the most. This information was used by staff in future taught sessions.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

1. Study overview with handouts of assessment criteria which is the focus of the study: ten minutes
2. Activity One: reviewing student response to questions about what they do with assessment criteria and why: ten minutes
3. *Key question*: are these responses similar to those of students at your institution?
4. Discussion of approaches taken to develop students' understanding of assessment criteria: ten minutes
Key question: could this approach work at your institution?
5. Activity Two: evaluation of approaches taken in relation to practice at own institution; discussion of findings, implications and future directions: fifteen minutes

References

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