

John Cowan's assessment examples for Business

Example JC6 (also an example in Civil Engineering)

Bridging towards self-directed, self-managed and self-evaluated learning

When: Undergraduate (first and penultimate years), postgraduate.

Purpose: To prepare learners to sustain their self-directed learning self-reliantly beyond the course experience. Ideally, this activity should be part of an individual or group project within a subject module, with aims (and assessment) which include *both* content mastery and the development of relevant higher level cognitive and interpersonal abilities;

Outline

1. Locate this activity in a module in which part of the goals features worthwhile self-directed development of higher level cognitive and interpersonal abilities.
2. Each student selects personal learning outcomes, and specifies them in SMART form;
3. Each student plans rigorously for these desired developments. They should specify criteria for monitoring, and for eventual evaluative judgements in accordance with their declared goals;
4. Each student should take and consider constructive comments from a peer upon their plan and chosen criteria, without obligation to discuss these comments or resolve differences;
5. Each student regularly reports progress to a fresh peer, and similarly considers constructive comments from them;
6. Each student prepares their final claim and self-judgement of their development, with a note of peers' comments;
7. The student's self-assessment should set out and use declared and valid criteria, describe performance accordingly, report consideration of peer comments, and reach a (personal) judgement based on objective comparison of these. Provided it does so, it is accepted and used by the institution.

Expected outcomes:

1. The outcome has been achievements by students to a standard which a professional validating body agreed to accredit – after the event!
2. In the case of Business Studies, the outcome has in effect been keen approval and encouragement from the professional body.

Comments:

1. It facilitates and demands self-directed, self-managed and self-assessed development as an apprenticeship in lifelong learning.
2. Student comments tend to be highly individual and personal. Volunteered feedback, often many years after the experience, includes: (a) Accounts of continuing practice, and successes arising from it; (b) Powerful objective evidence of striking professional successes arising from development and use of abilities; (c) High levels of personal satisfaction, arising from a worthwhile (and initially daunting) task well done.
3. [Students learn] Active engagement, giving and receiving feedback, working to some extent with peers, authentic and investigative activities, especially when active experimentation is being tested out, developing abilities and judgement, students designing and managing own assessment.
4. The personal development tutor must be facilitative, but not judgemental, nor authoritarian. Students' goals and standards should be treated with full unconditional positive regard and empathy. Trust, both ways, should develop. All in the learning community (including the tutor) must expect to learn from others, and should enthuse when worthwhile learning does ensue.

5. It's partly described, in an earlier version, in Boud's book on Self-Assessment. It also features in Francis, H. and Cowan, J. 2008. Fostering an action-reflection dynamic amongst student practitioners. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 32, 5: 336-346.

Example JC10 (also an example in Civil Engineering and Social Sciences)

Complete evaluation of a programme experience

When: Used in undergraduate year 1 (whole year), years 2 and 3 (one module), and postgraduate

Purpose: Providing and using a complete experience of the making of an evaluative judgement, which involves distinguishing between formative and summative evaluation.

Outline:

1. In the opening weeks of the programme, students should each compile a private 'Prior', in which they set out their hopes for the learning experience;
2. At the end of the programme, each student (not necessarily in accordance with the re-visited Prior) should specify the criteria by which they now evaluate their learning experience;
3. Students then apply their criteria to formulate a summative evaluation and judgement based on ingathered data; and a formative evaluation which identifies need, scope, suggestions and methods for feasible improvement.
4. Students should be involved in assembling and analysing the data, and formulating the occlusions to be drawn from it.

Expected outcome:

1. Comparative appreciation of and involvement in the processes of formative and summative evaluation *per se*, without its being directly related to the students' own work.

Comments:

1. It entails, in an activity which is ostensibly programme evaluation, a meaningful engagement with both formative and summative evaluative judgements.
2. Positive reactions, provided they were told that attention would be given to the evaluative judgements, and action taken for the benefit of the next cohort – and were shown, speedily, that this was happening.
3. [Students learn] Active engagement, giving and receiving feedback, working with peers, authentic and investigative activities, developing ability for making judgements, almost design of assessment (of a programme).
4. I find it more meaningful for all concerned to run an activity like this at roughly the half way stage in a programme, to identify improvements which can and should (and will) be made for the benefit of the current cohort.
5. Active engagement on the part of the students; genuine valuing of the outcome by staff.

