

[Forensic Science]

An Inclusive Assessment Case Study



What works?

When several enablers are aligned and adopted together in assessment design and delivery, they can have a significant positive impact on the outcomes for students.

Authentic assessments communicated well

Forensic science is an area of academic study where students benefit from authentic assessments that allow them to apply their knowledge in real world settings, but these assessments can often become challenging if there is not supporting and consistent communication to accompany the assessment.

The majority of forensic students shun the traditional sciences for this more applied route and not supporting this choice through authentic assessments would be detrimental to the students. Knowledge being applied within forensic casework or to capture forensic skills (such as court presentations) works to the students' strengths and interests while reflecting the working environment that students will potentially navigate on graduation.

Student support coupled with mental health awareness

Assessments are a triggering time for students, particularly those with additional learning and emotional support needs. It is therefore essential to address how we support our students effectively prior to and during their assessments to ensure as inclusive an experience as possible without compromising assessment standards and taking account of emotional and physical support needs. Transitioning back to campus post-pandemic has provided staff with opportunities to engage more effectively in person with their cohorts and create safe spaces where students are comfortable to ask questions. However, some staff have found that there is still a need for online support even post Covid because some students need to work and therefore struggle to attend drop in events. Consistency of assessment information for every module on the Virtual Learning Environment has also proved valuable.

ENABLERS



AUTHENTICITY



SUPPORT



CURRICULUM
ALIGNMENT



INNOVATION



COMMUNICATION



MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS

“at the end of each practical or on the end of the script, we have [a] CV booster. So that tells them what skills they’velearned in that session”

“.....face to face, I can walk around a class. I know students’ names. Itry to foster an environment where they’re happy to put the hand up in class at any point. “

“a discussion board is much more inclusive because you know [it] could be that they don’t come to that drop in session because they’re working at that time or they’ve got ... other stuff going on”

“..... looking at what they knew, what they needed to find out and asking about how they could actually where they could go and find information”

The use of extensions is being rethought post pandemic, with a realisation that they are not always beneficial to the student if they cause a bunching of an extended deadline with other assessment deadlines. Staff are engaging in dialogue with students to help them assess the impacts (good and bad) of extensions, and in one institution extensions are no longer automatically given as they were during the pandemic.

Innovation of Compassionate Assessment Design

The pandemic forced many classes online with practical classes being replicated within an online environment. This forced examinations to be conducted online which highlighted some issues around how the students engaged with these, with some students openly explaining that they relied on Google and therefore learned very little, whilst others utilised the longer assessment periods to research questions more thoroughly and were therefore able to demonstrate more advanced learning.

Post pandemic staff have been able to consider their learning from pandemic teaching and incorporate these into more innovative and compassionate assessments. In many modules traditional examinations have been discontinued in favour of much more authentic assessment methods. The return to campus has allowed for more formative assessment opportunities preparing the students more fluently for summative assessment but also to perform this in a more compassionate manner that takes into account the students themselves. However, staff workload and students needing to undertake paid work can sometimes jeopardise the uptake and effectiveness of formative assessment.

Guidance and Top Tips

- Consider authentic assessment opportunities
- Develop a compassionate learning environment
- Communicate with care and precision
- Innovate to provide a variety of assessment types

[Link to Inclusive Assessment Attributes](#)

**University Alliance Collaborative Enhancement Project:
Supporting student progression and attainment through
sustainable Inclusive Assessment Practice: What Works?**

This case study has been compiled based on evidence of inclusive assessment practice in Forensic Science from two of the project partners: