TaLiC
Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre

Authentic Assessment

Change is inevitable.

The question is, are we ready?

Traditionally, summative exams or tests have been used by teachers to assess students. While these approaches can assess students' knowledge, they often fail to assess students' deeper learning. In light of this, we need other types of assessment to evaluate this aspect of students' learning. These types of assessments are termed as authentic assessment (also known as alternative assessment).

Authentic or Alternative Assessment

Authentic assessment, typically classified as formative assessment, is assessment other than standard exams and tests. It engages students in the solving of realistic or authentic problems, contextualizing their learning in such problems or situations, allowing them to demonstrate what they have learned in real-life scenarios. Unlike traditional assessment, authentic assessment focuses on evaluating students' higher order thinking skills (e.g. analytical skills, critical thinking) rather than students' level of knowledge.

Traditional Assessment VS Authentic Assessment

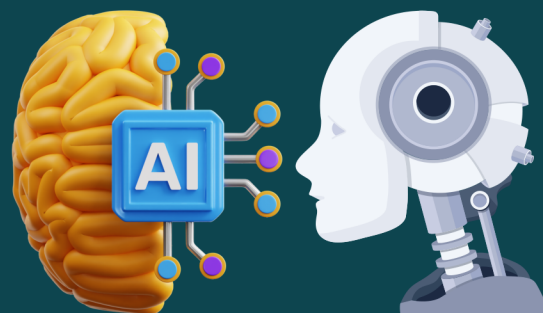| Traditional Assessment	Authentic Assessment
• Students are required to provide correct answers	• Students are informed about what they will be assessed on in advance
• Focus is on facts	• Students are required to integrate a range of skills and knowledge in order to solve problems
• Marking is straightforward	• Students need to complete complex tasks in order to be graded
• A score is given after exams or tests are completed	• Students can be graded during the authentic assessment, task, and feedback is usually provided

Assessment with Generative AI

With the rapid growth of technology and artificial intelligence, Generative AI is being increasingly adopted into education. With Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, assessment tasks have become transformed, accelerated, and simplified. However, due to concerns about authenticity in student work and ethical issues in using AI-generated work, most universities around the world are facing the question of how they should embrace Generative AI in academia.

Universities around the world will need to change their assessment practices to adapt to this era of technology. Teachers are thus experiencing pressure to change their course assessment designs in order to respond to the rise of Generative AI. While AI can also be used to generate grades and automated feedback, authentic assessment is becoming an increasingly popular option for educators to evaluate their students' progress in their courses. Overall, advancements in Generative AI should be taken as an opportunity for universities to transform existing assessment practices, as well as develop new practices.

Still hesitant about authentic assessment?

Here are your concerns answered …

Q: Isn't authentic assessment time consuming and resource intensive?

A: Authentic assessment may require more time and effort to develop and may be more difficult to grade. However, once a grading rubric is developed to specify the learning outcomes that will be evaluated and the criteria by which students will be assessed upon, it will be manageable.

Q: Will my students feel uncomfortable with authentic assessment, given that they are more familiar with traditional assessment?

A: Students may need time to become familiar with authentic assessment. As long as we provide clear guidelines and ongoing support, students are likely to find authentic assessment more interesting because it involves real-world tasks. As it draws on their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems, they are able to demonstrate their competencies to not only their teachers, but also to themselves, which can be motivating. You may be surprised by how highly students have been found to value authentic assessment.

Q: Is authentic assessment less academically rigorous?

A: It is not true that authentic assessment is less academically rigorous - in fact, it allows us to assess students' ability to apply academic knowledge to real-life situations. In other words, it allows us to assess higher order thinking skills, which goes beyond looking at students' knowledge acquisition.

Assessment Methods

If you have decided to implement authentic assessment, the next step is to decide on which type of assessment to use for your course. There are different authentic assessment methods, such as:

- Open Book Exam
- Concept Maps
- Blogs / Vlogs
- Digital Story Telling
- Making infographics
- Podcasting
- Discussion Boards
- Portfolios
- … and so on.

For more authentic assessment methods, please refer to the following reference:

Ryerson University. (n.d.). *Best practice: alternative assessment*. Retrieved from: https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/learning-teaching/teaching-resources/assessment/alternative-assessments.pdf