Designing assessment

Warren Richards
Head of Department
Mathematics

Effective assessment basically starts from having a look at your topic outlines for that particular assessment you’re setting up. You make sure you’ve got the coverage of all the areas of the various topics. Then I’ll always be mindful of the syllabus descriptors of the exit comments for each particular three criteria. You make sure then that you get a good coverage right across from A to E or probably D, more specifically for each of those criteria, that’s the key thing for a start.

Alan Allinson
Head of Physics

It’s about using the exit criteria. It’s about making sure that questions are using the language of that exit criteria so that you are drawing out the right response.

Evan Winter
Teacher
Mathematics

When we design our assessment we have to make certain that we’ve covered all the standards from A through to E.

Warren Richards

From a D question we’re looking at very simple familiar questions that we’ve done quite often in class. The C level is obviously just the next step up from there where we’re using simple routine questions again. However we don’t give those simple cues of given formulas or perhaps rehearse them as much in the classroom. Then I would go probably to the A type questions where we’re looking at more complex, unrehearsed-type scenarios and we basically have to look at those, both life related and abstract situations.

Evan Winter

Based on syllabus descriptors, for a student to be an A they have to be able to demonstrate simple routine; they have to be able to demonstrate complex routine; they have to be able to demonstrate simple non-routine across topics, in life related and in abstract situations.

Warren Richards

To get an A rating obviously in those particularly criteria it’s important that they’d be able to demonstrate both life related and the abstract. If they are going to do that in one particular aspect rather than both of them, that would put them down with the B category.
Allocating marks

Warren Richards  The allocation of marks from A to D type questions tends to work on the number of steps that are required to complete that particular question; it's important to not just give part marks for this line to this line to this line. There should be demonstrated techniques that were actually rewarding and, of course, if the technique is a more difficult one, there be more marks allocated to that particular aspect.

Alan Allinson  I think first of all it's in the construction of questions that we are trying to elicit particular responses. The things that we find key in those responses — we allocate marks. We allocate marks within an A standard question, we allocate marks in a B standard question and allocate marks in a C standard question.

Evan Winter  So if a question is asking you to substitute into an equation, which might be a simple routine question, we would allocate marks if they could remember the equation, half mark; another half mark if they could substitute correctly; another half mark for their arithmetic facility and maybe another half mark for their answer, make a total of a two-mark question.

Maria Bell  We also expect that our marks be allocated in a balanced way to suit the questions that we put on there — so, for example, simple routine style questions we would expect a certain percentage or a number of marks out of the total to be allocated to simple routine. Likewise to simple non-routine, complex routine and complex non-routine.

Determining grade boundaries

Evan Winter  We find with marks we allocate correctly probably about 95% of the time straight away, but you always want to check the borderline students particularly those Ds going into C, and I suppose those Bs going into A, but particularly we really look at those Ds going into C.

Warren Richards  To make sure that the mark that the students received aligns with the syllabus standards, it's just very important in the end to go back and look at the student's folio, follow the student's work of that particular instrument and just simply match it up with the descriptors.

Alan Allinson  As far as the cutoffs are concerned, we set them in place; they will generate our results but then that gives us on our sheet a provisional grade.

Maria Bell  The decision is initially based on arbitrary cutoffs that we've pre-decided, but following from that decision making needs to occur after that mark or percentage is calculated, and that's an absolute critical step, it's not just that a student has achieved 84% and gets a B+. If they have met the criteria for an A as described in the standard then we must give them that A.

Alan Allinson  It works probably 90% of the time that the marks we use and the cutoffs we use generate the grades that we think are appropriate for their work. There's the occasional one that you have to go back to the criteria (it's a criteria system) and look [to see] have they really
achieved them.

Warren Richards  The important thing is that what we do also at our school is, at the end of the year, when we collect the folio and get results for that criteria, we make sure we don't just add up all the marks across every instrument. That would be silly — basically every instrument is a little bit different, weighted differently and that would give a false idea. At the end of the day really it does come back to the fact that looking at the students' work and comparing against the syllabus standards, that's how the decision should be made.