

Playing to their strengths

Improving student engagement and learning outcomes through flexible assessment

Ashley Edwards¹ and Tina Acuna² (¹School of Zoology, ²School of Agricultural Science)



Background

Assessment impacts on student learning and engagement - feelings of control and ownership can be highly motivating and engaging.

Offering students the flexibility to actively choose the weightings of assessment tasks can increase their willingness to accept responsibility for their own learning. Personalising the learning process can result in measurable increases in learning outcomes.

This project will investigate whether being offered flexible assessment opportunities and being able to “play to their strengths” results in a measurable increase in university undergraduate student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

Pilot data demonstrate that feelings about desirable assessment task weightings *do* change as students mature as learners and come to understand their preferred learning styles, strengths and weaknesses.

Approach

- use of paper surveys, SETL questions, student-led “café-style” discussion groups, analysis of written work samples
- evaluation of levels of engagement and improvement in learning outcomes at all undergraduate levels of study
- comparison of the highly prescribed Bachelor of Ag. Sci. and the less restrictive BSc
- comparisons between year groups, tracking individual 1st, 2nd and 3rd year cohorts between semesters

Experimental focus on 2nd year students

- data collected in Semester 1 used to develop flexible assessment opportunities implemented and evaluated in Semester 2

WE NEED YOU!



We believe this project will result in sustainable flexible assessment techniques for the UTAS community - not *extra* work for staff, but rather a *different* and more student-centred way of achieving better outcomes for students.



We will run workshops in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie to:

- share what we find
- demonstrate ways you can incorporate flexible assessment into your teaching

If you would like to participate, please leave your name and contact details here on the sign up sheet