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<thead>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Empowering learners with self-selecting learning tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Dempsey, Mary; Brennan, Attracta</td>
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EMPOWERING LEARNERS WITH SELF-SELECTING LEARNING TOOLS

Mary Dempsey
Attracta Brennan
National University of Ireland, Galway
Background – Assessment Strategies

Mixed Model
- Self Assessment
- End of Semester Assessment
- Terminal Exam

Mixed Model Piecemeal
- Self Assessment
- Continuous Assessment
- Terminal Exam

Empowering Learners
- Self Selecting Learning Tools
- Terminal Exam


+ = ?
GRADER TYPES

OPTIMIST

These answers are half right!

PESSIMIST

These answers are half wrong!

REALIST

Statistically speaking, my teaching has had no impact.
2009/2010 Assessment Strategy
(350+ students)

9 x **practice** Self Assessment Tests (SATs), Answer 25 questions in **60 minutes** over 12 weeks

**Self Assessment Tests**

- To reinforce lecture material and student readings, SATs will be set in the week following Unit completion.
- Each SAT is worth 5%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Scheduled*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,7</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,8</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>Week 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6 plus random questions drawn from other units</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
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We also provided a **31 page assessment guide**

Terminal exam of 42 MCQ questions (75%)
2008/2009

Design
- Question and Answer Banks
- Structure for Blackboard

Delivery
- Unstable
- Unreliable

Administration
- SAT 2.5 hours x 9
- 153 emails
- CAT 11 Hours

Reflection 1: Administrative Nightmare
Administered via Blackboard live on Friday 27th March 2009 from 11am to 11pm

The test attracts 25% of the final year marks

There will be 25 questions

Questions types will be mainly multiple choice, but also multiple answer and possibly Likert scale

There will be 40 minutes to complete it

Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9 will be tested

Students must not collaborate when completing the test

Questions will be drawn from a pool, thus will be different for each student

Questions will be presented in a different order for each student

Answer parts will be presented in a different order for each student

Acronyms will be used for some questions

Close your books and notes before taking the test

One attempt is allowed for the test

One attempt permitted

Forced completion will apply. Be absolutely clear that this means once you open the test, you must complete it at that sitting, within 40 minutes. You will not be able to take a peak and log off or press escape and expect to get back to complete the test.

If a student, for whatever reason, starts but does not complete the test, they will not be given a second chance to complete it on Blackboard. For students who can put forward clear evidence that the reason for non-completion was beyond their control, some mechanism may be made for manual completion of the test. This courtesy will NOT be given to students who do not attempt the test on Blackboard. We are able to ascertain this information in several ways.

Compose yourself for the test and good luck!

Students must use computers in NUI Galway only
Dear Mary,

My name is Conor xxx .....I had just opened the test when the battery went on my computer and when I tried to retake it, it will not allow me to do it now. Is there any way that I can retake this?

Many Thanks

Conor
“Claire here... I'm really enjoying the course! I had just logged on to take the unit 9 test and my internet disconnected therefore forcing my test to end. I had not even attempted it. I would be very grateful if it were possible that I got another chance?”

Reflection 2: Many students did not read the conditions
Hi Mary,
i was hoping to meet you.. i jus basically want to know how to prepare for this subject. i am really confused and all the different systems are making me scared coz i am reading the core texts and i cant figure out how am i going to bring it together for the exam. should i jus follow the lecture notes and write notes from the book or simply learn it from the book. i dont mind if your busy and cant meet so i put my query in the mail too..
thanks

Reflection 3: What do we need to change to support student learning?
“I am just wondering if at some stage in the next week or two if you could put back up the continuous online assessments we took for the last number of weeks. Would it be possible to put them up as practice assignments that you can take as many times as you like. I think they would be good study practice”
Re-thinking Learning Environments

Accommodate increasing student numbers (Reidy 2015)
Focus on ‘fitness for purpose’ learning outcomes (LOs) to provide students with critical key graduate attributes congruent with:

- Curriculum aims, scope and structure.
- Teaching and learning activities.
- Learning support.
- Students’ backgrounds, knowledge and aspirations.
- Assessment and feedback.
- Course organisation and management.

(D. Hounsell and J. Hounsell, 2007)
Use of a constructive alignment process to support LOs
(J. Biggs, 2012)

Encourage students in linking assessment with learning, thereby showing that assessment can be used to strategically change the way they learn
(G. Gibbs, 1999)

Inverting the classroom can bridge the gap between instructors’ teaching style and students’ learning style and scaffold learning
(M. Lage and al, 2000)
Empower learners by providing self-selecting learning tools

- Move away from over-assessing students into more activity-based practice
- Students learn by doing
- Self-Selecting Learning Resource Assessment Tools as part of an Operations module curriculum re-design

Underpin key graduate attribute development and align with the four purposes of assessment certification, student learning, quality assurance and lifelong learning capacity (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007)
Outline
Methodology

363 students surveyed with a 13.7% response rate
Research Q1: Are self-selected learning resource assessment tools effective?

Research Q2: Does the use of self-selecting learning resource assessment tools result in an impact on the final mark awarded?

Research Q3: Are self-selecting learning resource assessment tools effective as portals/learning thresholds?
Research Q1:

Are self-selected learning resource assessment tools effective?
Students actively participated in the on-line SATS

- Engaged Rarely: 7%
- Occasionally: 56%
- Regularly: 37%
Students rated the difficulty of work they were expected to do

- **Fairly Difficult**: 28%
- **Fairly Easy**: 37%
- **Very Easy**: 7%
AMOUNT OF TIME AND EFFORT SPENT ENGAGED WITH THE LEARNING RESOURCES

- 49% spent a lot of time and effort
- 51% minimum required

Working on the module outside the classroom

- Less than 1 hour: 12%
- 1-3 hours: 49%
- 3-5 hours: 37%
- 5-10 hours: 2%
AGREED THAT THE SELF-SELECTED TOOLS COMPLEMENTED THEIR LEARNING

FOUND IT AN EASY TASK TO BE ORGANIZED AND RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN LEARNING

FOUND IT A DIFFICULT TASK TO BE ORGANIZED AND RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN LEARNING

UNSURE HOW TO BE ORGANIZED AND RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN LEARNING
Reflective comments

‘I am just wondering if at some stage in the next week or two if you could put back up the continuous online assessments we took for the last number of weeks. Would it be possible to put them up as practice assignments that you can take as many times as you like. I think they would be good study practice’

‘I think the blackboard test is much better than a written assessment as you get an instant result and blackboard is quite easy to use’
Research Q2:

Does the use of self-selecting learning resource assessment tools result in an impact on the final mark awarded?
**Research question 2:** Does the use of self-selecting learning resource assessment tools result in an impact on the final mark awarded?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA (30%)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Written</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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Research Q3:

Are self-selecting learning resource assessment tools effective as portals/learning thresholds?
AGREED THAT THEY WERE GIVEN THE NECESSARY SUPPORTS TO MASTER THE RELATED THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

REQUIRED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN ENTERING INTO AND BEING HELD WITHIN THE LIMINAL SPACE

ACKNOWLEDGED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EDUCATOR’S APPROACH TO SHARING THEIR ENTHUSIASM
Reflective comments

‘I wouldn’t prefer written assessment. I find the MCQ test better because I am more comfortable when doing assessments on the computer, I feel it is very fair and I get my results straight away’

_The questions were clear and unambiguous (before I had the panic attack!!)_

‘It was very adequate as it covered every chapter and the questions were relatively difficult so students needed to have the chapters learned to know the answers to the questions’
Gained additional skills

- A lot: 50%
- Not much/very little: 24%
- Unsure: 26%
## Engagement in 2016/2017

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Conclusions

- Integrating SATs as part of the LOs positions SATs as aids and learning tools rather than assessments.

- On-line resources and self-selecting online assessment tools
  - encourages student engagement with the content
  - empowers and complements student learning.
  - supports activity based practice

- Increases students confidence and organisational skills
thank you!