Interactive Oral Assessment: User Guide

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https://www.dcu.ie/teu/assessment-design

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Interactive Oral Assessment at DCU

An Interactive Oral Assessment is a two-way conversation using a work-based or professional scenario to stimulate a free-flowing discussion. It is designed to be a curious type of conversation where the prompts allow students to showcase their learning in a natural type environment. It facilitates the exploration of a student's deep and higher-order understanding of a topic. It is different from an oral exam or a viva where a question and answer format is used within strict exam conditions that can be sometimes stressful for the student.

Overview

The TEU is collaborating with Griffith University, Queensland, Australia, to implement interactive orals as a viable alternative assessment to traditional assessments. Griffith University has extensive experience and a body of evidence-based research to show that interactive orals are an authentic assessment approach that effectively helps prepare students for employment. Also, when used as part of a strategically designed integrated assessment, both within the module and across the programme, can promote academic integrity.

There is a small group of DCU academics using this approach, led by the TEU in collaboration with Danielle Logan-Flemming of Griffith University. The group meets weekly as part of a Community of Practice (CoP). This guide is an ongoing work in progress and is compiled by all members of this Interactive Oral Community of Practice (IO CoP). The IO CoP meets every Wednesday 9 - 10 am. There is an open invitation to all DCU academics to join the CoP - if you would like to join and/or need further support, please email Lily Girme (lily.girme@dcu.ie) in the Teaching Enhancement Unit.

This guide contains two main sections - one for the academic i.e. the interactive oral facilitator; and the other for the students. The student section can be copied and pasted (and/or edited) by each academic/facilitator to ensure it meets the specific requirements of each individual module. The student guide section will form part of the module assessment brief and module handbook.

Information Videos and Podcasts

1. This brief 2.5-minute [introductory video](#) gives you a sense of what interactive oral assessments at DCU are, and how the approach is supported.
2. [This podcast presents an introduction to this approach](#). In the podcast, Dr. Tara Concannon-Gibney and Niamh Watkins share their experience of using interactive orals as an assessment tool.
3. An overview of the approach and the role of the Community of Practice can be found in this [linked 1-minute video recording](#).
4. The following two podcasts offer you insight into interactive orals from the student's perspective - [Ryan (3 mins)](#) and [Rachel (4 mins)](#) .
5. [IO Timeline document with suggested resources for each stage](#) for a clear picture of the IO implementation process.
6. [Playlist of 18 brief video examples](#) of interactive oral assessments across a host of different disciplines. This playlist was edited from a shared Interactive Oral Community of Practice that was facilitated by Griffith University, hosted by DCU with contributions from both universities and Charles Sturt.

Feel free to use any of these resources with your students to help engage and prepare them for the interactive oral.

Guide for the Facilitator (Academic)

This section of the guide offers advice for the academic who is facilitating (and assessing) the students. The guide begins with some general advice by way of introduction, and then follows with the guidance pre, during, and post interactive oral (IO).

Interactive Oral Assessment Process

To ensure you and your students get the best experience of IO we recommend you seek support from others by making good use of the experience in DCU of IO. If possible join our weekly Community of Practice (CoP) weekly meetings which take place on Wednesday mornings at 10 am via Zoom. Reach out to colleagues within your school who are already using this assessment approach. The following diagram provides a general overview of the process we use in DCU.
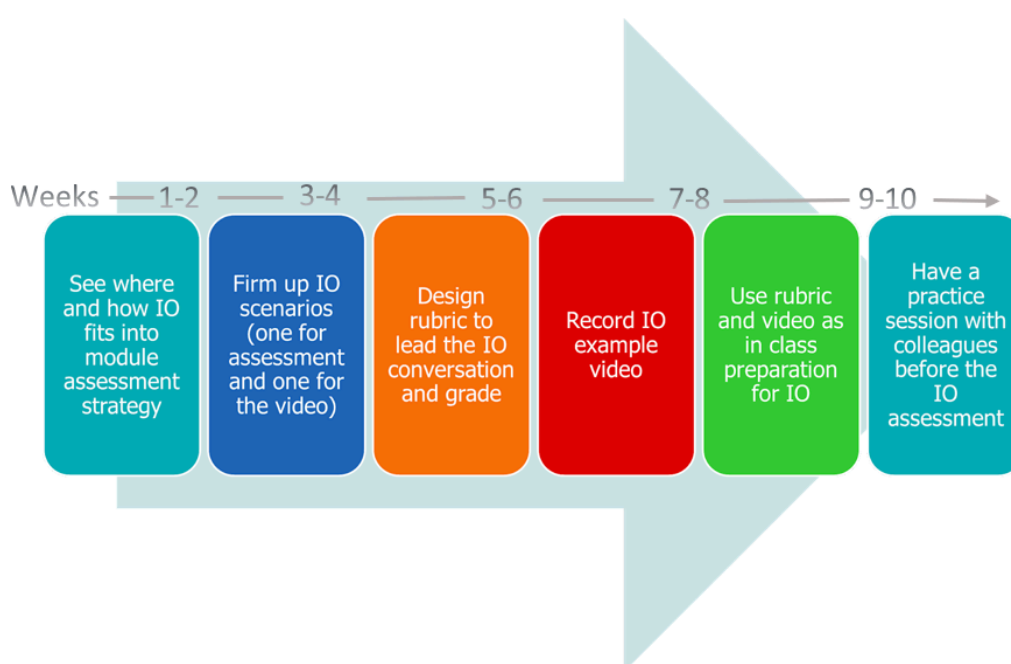
Prior to the interactive oral, it is advisable that academics engaging in this approach consider the method as part of an overall scaffolded assessment design, and as such should reflect on the following points:

- The interactive oral should be part of an integrated and scaffolded module assessment design;
- The module learning outcomes will inform the full assessment design, therefore it will be clear where and how the interactive oral is aligned with the learning outcomes;
- This approach requires a pre-designed rubric or marking guide, and a pre-recorded example, which should be on a scenario or text/topic NOT discussed for your IO;
- The rubric and example recording are used as a teaching and dialogue tool with students as partners.

A quality IO rubric should do the following four things:
1. Brief the students on what their responses should look like to obtain each standard for each criterion (one size does not fit all!)

2. Allow for efficient marking of the student's work during and after the IO, including moderation.
3. Provide the students with meaningful feedback/feedforward based on their conversation at the interactive oral.
4. Help quality-assure the student's learning across the cohort and across subsequent cohorts by criterion.

Scenario Examples

The scenario that is used is important for setting the scene. It should be as authentic and close to real life as possible. The scenario should frame the two-way free-flowing conversation, and in many ways make it easier and less stressful to engage in a natural conversation. Some examples of scenarios include:
● Students sharing examples of what they are working on at an open day with potential new students;
● Students explain some current economic or social issue to a friend or family at a BBQ;
● Students are interviewed by a radio presenter on some aspect of their work e.g. a new business idea, a book they reviewed etc.;
● Students having conversations with peers about work they presented at a conference;
● Students discuss a project design with a potential client or funder;
● Students joining a new work-based multi-disciplinary team need to explain what their discipline expertise will bring to the project.

This list is by no means exhaustive, it is just to give you some ideas to help you be creative and innovative in your scenario design.

Pre Interactive Oral

● Input rubric to Loop ensuring you turn off all the file submission settings as students are not actually submitting an assignment, they are attending one, user guide linked here.
● If the IO is online (using Zoom) Set up Loop scheduler in advance, user guide linked here.
● Set up your Zoom meeting in advance with the recording function and waiting room pre-set. (Remember to pause the recording after each oral, and resume before each oral).
● Where possible do not schedule too many IOs in one day or consecutive days - the recommendation is maximum 20 x IOs per day and approx. 15 mins per IO (i.e. 10 mins for the IO and 5 mins to mark) but this will vary when IO is in pairs or groups (10 minutes roughly equates to 4,000 words).
● Ensure that you schedule sufficient breaks.
● Keep the schedule 'hidden' until you are ready for students to select their time.
● Show students where the scheduling tool is on Loop.
● Remind students to bring their student card to the IO with them, if this is a requirement. With smaller student cohorts, the zoom recording with student camera on might suffice for you to be assured of the student's identity.

- Remind students that they will be in the Zoom 'waiting room' until you give them access to the IO.
- Ensure students are aware that the IO is recorded and will be used as a quality assurance and moderation tool.
- Remind students this IO will NOT be in front of the full class - it is simply between the student(s), and the facilitator (academic/assessor/s).
- Use rubric and example IO recorded video for class discussion and preparation for IO. Check out the rubric /marking guide to ensure it works the way you expect, and if appropriate work with students to amend the marking guide/criteria (i.e. partner students).
- Ensure that you have a working webcam, microphone, and two screens available (one is for direct marking purposes) and that any tutors marking for you have the same setup. If two screens are not available, paper can be used for marking/viewing the rubric, and grades can be transferred later.

Scheduler user guide

This 6 minute video guide was produced by Noeleen O'Keeffe, Academic Developer in the Teaching Enhancement Unit. If you would like further guidance please feel free to contact noeleen.okeeffe@dcu.ie

Rubric user guide

DCU Guide to Assessment Rubrics - this TEU guide to assessment rubrics outlines their role in guiding teaching, learning and assessment and provides guidance on both the creation of rubrics and utilising them in your teaching practice

Sample Rubrics   - here you will find some sample rubrics including some related to interactive oral assessments

During the Interactive Oral

- Use a timer to manage time effectively.
- Where possible use two screens, one for the IO conversation, and the other for the rubric/marking sheet.
- Make sure the student is aware that you are recording.
- Resume or start recording before each IO, and then pause or stop at the end of each IO.
- Ask to see the student themselves (i.e. on camera), and picture ID before they start to verify identity.
- Listen actively, looking to assure yourself of the student's learning. Remember - there is no script so each IO will look and feel a little different.
- Stay in the scenario - remember to prompt and not question to keep the conversation flowing.
- Enjoy the experience! Having the time to connect with your students to assure their learning is more quality one-to-one time than many of your students will ever have had with their lecturers. They will really value the experience.

Example prompts

Tell me more about…..
What would you recommend….
In coming to your decision/recommendation did you consider…..
I noted…I am curious as to why…
I am not clear on…I have doubts about...I am willing to be convinced otherwise…
I would welcome any additional thoughts you have on…
I would be interested to hear your rationale for…
I would like to use this opportunity to hear your recommendations on…

Post Interactive Oral

- Moderate the marks between days and also between markers, if applicable..
- If possible, provide feedback to students in the form of a class debrief more generally (synchronously or asynchronously).
- Send each student individual marks and feedback via marking guide/rubric.
- Send out the IO survey to students for feedback.

Guide for the Students

Introduction

This section of the guide offers guidance for students. It is advisable that you review the following bullets in detail, and then copy/modify/edit to include as part of the assessment brief and module handbook.

Pre Interactive Oral

- Schedule your slot in Loop in the Assessment Tile/Block.
- Study the rubric and recorded video example for the IO to ensure you are prepared to converse under each criterion.
- Seek clarification/direction from your lecturer on any aspect of the IO that you are not clear on. The "ask a question" function on Loop may be a useful way to do this.
- Know your brief/project well.
- It is fine to have some notes prepared but remember this is an interactive, unscripted, authentic conversation. You will therefore not be reading from notes. Brief, unobtrusive checking of notes during the IO is permissible but should not halt the flow of the IO.
- No PowerPoint or slides: again, remember this is an unscripted conversation.
- Bring your student card with you as ID.
- Check the time allocated for the IO and ensure you make the best use of the time. Prepare well in advance.
- Remember it is natural for brief pauses/silences, and where applicable to consult with your colleague(s)/peers, if this is a paired or group IO.

During the Interactive Oral

- Be prepared to show your student card at the beginning of the IO.
- Zoom link for the IO will be ...*(tell students where the link will be)*
- Log into Zoom at least 10 minutes before your scheduled time.
- Wait in the Zoom waiting room until the IO Facilitator (lecturer) admits you.
- Ensure your mic and camera are on.
- If working in groups/pairs ensure all contribute.
- Do not read pre-prepared notes, feel free to refer to them briefly and unobtrusively. Remember this is a fluid, free-flowing conversation.
- If the technology lets you down, email your IO Facilitator (lecturer) immediately and they will reschedule.

- Be prepared to contribute to the IO.
- Be respectful of all members in the IO.
- Part of your role is to allow each other to contribute.
- You may be directly invited to contribute if you are tending to hold back.

Post Interactive Oral

- Complete anonymised feedback/research survey. Your lecturer will send you the link after the IO.

What Students Say about Interactive Orals - Podcasts

The following two podcasts offer you insight into interactive orals from the student's perspective - Ryan (3 mins) and Rachel (4 mins).

Additional Support Resources

References

Ní Bheoláin, R., Lowney, R. & O'Riordan, F. (2020). Students as Partners in Assessment: A Literature Scoping Review. Dublin: Dublin City University. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4270579

Pearce, J. & Chiavaroli, N. (2020). 'Prompting Candidates in Oral Assessment Contexts: A Taxonomy and Guiding Principles', *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, Volume 7: 1-4, https://doi.org/10.1177/2382120520948881

Sotiriadou, P., Logan, D., Daly, A. & Guest, R. (2020) 'The role of authentic assessment to preserve academic integrity and promote skill development and employability', *Studies in Higher Education*, 45:11, 2132-2148, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1582015

Ward, M., O'Riordan, F., Logan-Fleming, D., Cooke, D., Concannon-Gibney, T., , M. & Watkins, N. (2023) Interactive oral assessment case studies: An innovative, academically rigorous, authentic assessment approach, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, DOI: 10.1080/14703297.2023.2251967

Many examples and resources are available at Griffith University Sway, linked here.

Interactive Oral recorded examples & associated rubrics

Dr Dervila Cooke and associated rubric
Dr Marina Efthymiou and associated rubric
Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney and Niamh Watkins and associated rubric.
Dr Monica Ward and associated rubric

FAQ

1. What is the difference between an IO and a viva?

A viva is an oral interview where students are asked questions in defense of their work. An IO is a fluid, genuine conversation, designed to simulate some real-life scenario. It is about the academic getting into a role and probing the student, in a curious way, in relation to a pre-designed scenario (as outlined in the assessment brief).

2. When doing pair or group IOs, are students marked as a group or individually?

Each student is normally marked individually according to their ability to perform individually in relation to the criteria outlined in the rubric or marking guide. The purpose of pair or group IOs can be to give students confidence working with peers, and for scalability for the academic with large student cohorts. However, there may be times when the module learning outcomes call out teamwork, and then team marks may be appropriate. Finally, to note, it is ultimately the prerogative of the lecturer to award marks as they determine appropriate i.e. individual, group, or paired marks.

3. Is it GDPR compliant to record the IOs?

Yes, it is GDPR compliant when using DCU centralised tools such as zoom (or unicam).

4. Are students scheduled towards the end of the IO process advantaged over those who went first?

No, all students are treated equally and fairly. Each IO is a unique, free-flowing conversation with its own individual dynamic related to the specific student(s) at the oral.

5. What type of lead-in time is required to design an IO assessment?

Approx. 3-4 weeks is required to develop the rubric and exemplar. You may need to consider the availability of colleagues to act as interviewees for your exemplars, and the question of the language of delivery. Working as part of a CoP, such as with this project, helps speed up the process through collaboration and sharing.

Interactive Oral Assessment Template

This interactive oral (IO) assessment template is used to guide discussions as you begin to prepare your assessment. Each element of this template will be explored in detail during our weekly community of practice (CoP) meetings.

Module Title	
ECTS credits	
Module learning outcomes	
Learning outcomes being assessed with the IO	
How is the IO integrated with other assessments in the module	
Weighting for IO	
Number of students in the cohort	
Number of markers	
Individual, paired or group IO's	
Proposed authentic scenario(s)	
Proposed roles for marker & student/s within the scenario/s	
Scenario for recorded example	
Proposed roles for marker & student/s within the scenario/s of the recorded example	
Marking criteria (to guide the design of more detailed rubric)	

Interactive Oral Assessment Checklist

Before doing your interactive oral assessment, check that you have done the following:

- ☐ Developed an authentic scenario
- ☐ Developed and clearly articulated the roles that the marker and student/s will take within the authentic scenario
- ☐ Designed a rubric to guide and mark the interactive flow of conversation during the IO assessment
- ☐ Considered conversation prompts to relate to one or more of the marking criteria
- ☐ Recorded an example of IO using a similar, but different, scenario
- ☐ Discussed the recorded example and rubric in class with students
- ☐ Included formative activities to scaffold oral communication in workshops
- ☐ Agreed venue for the assessment (online via zoom and scheduler, or booked a class)
- ☐ Trained any additional markers to ensure consistent delivery
- ☐ Considered feedback and feedforward opportunities