Assessing and Providing Feedback to Large Groups

DCU

Assessment is a time consuming duty for a lecturer, especially if the class is large in number. The challenges of assessing a large group of students are numerous:

- ensuring consistent standards of assessment
- providing individualized feedback
- time constraints of marking large numbers of assignments

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education in Australia identifies 5 challenges to assessing large groups 5 challenges to assessing large groups:

1. Avoiding assessment that encourages shallow learning
2. Providing high quality, individual feedback
3. Fairly assessing a diverse mix of students
4. Managing the volume of marking and coordinating the staff involved in marking
5. Avoiding plagiarism

However with some planning and preparation, assessing large classes can be less time consuming and more beneficial for students and lecturers. The two links below provide creative ways to both assess and provide feedback for students of large groups.

Article by Phil Race on using feedback for large groups, from University of York

How to guide from University of Worcester for the following feedback/assessmen tools: Recording Lectures; Narrating Powerpoint Slides; Quizzes and Animations; Recording your Screen; Electronic Voting Systems; Second Life and Games Engines

Methods for assessing/providing feedback to large groups

Professor Sally Brown from Leeds Metropolitan University offers 7 methods for providing feedback to large groups of students and for assessing large groups of students.

Click here for presentation by Professor Sally Brown on giving feedback to large groups of students.

Assessing and Providing Feedback to Large Groups

Here are 3 methods mentioned in the above presentation by Professor Sally Brown:

1. Use model answers

What are they?
Model answers are examples that demonstrate how students can succeed on an assignment. Model answers show examples of successful assignments and are not meant to be seen by students as the only way to achieve a good grade. They can be used for essays, presentations, and poster assignments.

Model answers are only helpful to students if lecturers highlight how the answer is successful. One method of doing this in relation to an essay assignment could be to use the track changes function to insert comments into the word file; then the model answer can be posted online.

To maximize impact, go through the model answers with the class as a whole. Lecturers can also distribute past assignments to the students and get them to evaluate whether they think the assignments are successful themselves.

What can they look like?
These models can be past students' assignments used with their permission, or they can be mock-up answers made by the lecturer.

Model answers can be in a Word format as described above if the assignment is an essay. If it is a presentation, it can be in a Powerpoint format with the comments in the notes section.

Example of model answers for a biology course at Cambridge. Here you can see how the professor has added their comments by clicking on the areas marked with red.

2. Use assignment return sheets

What are they?
Assignment return sheets are coversheets for assignments that provide the marking criteria or rubric for the assignment.

The purpose is to guide both the student and the assessor by providing an easy reference to the criteria and weighting for the various components of the assignment.

They can also be used as a type of self-assessment. Lecturers may ask the student to hand in their assignment with 2 copies of the assignment return sheet: one to be filled out by the lecturer, and one filled out by the student so that the lecturer has an idea of how the student believes they performed.

Assessing and Providing Feedback to Large Groups

What can they look like?
An assignment return sheet is similar to a <u>feedback form</u>, and only differs in that it is more explicit in the criteria.

In addition to the rubric, the assignment return sheet should also have a comment box where the lecturer can write comments.

<u>Example of assignment return sheet from the University of Liverpool</u>

3. Write a whole-class assignment report / Whole-class feedback

What are they?
Overall reports provide students information on how the class did as a whole on the assignment.

They can highlight areas of the assignment that the majority did well on or did poorly. This is useful to students so they can see how they are performing in relation to their peers. It is useful for lecturers because they can target the assignment criteria where students are under-performing as a whole. For example, if referencing was an area where all students did poorly, the lecturer can provide extra resources to all students and reduce the need for one on one consultation and repetition.

To maximize impact, give the overall assignment report as a handout stapled to the assignments, go over the overall report in class orally, and post it online so students can refer back to it.

What can they look like?

Whole-class feedback can be given as text in the form of a whole-class report as described above, or it can be given as an mp3 file or podcast so that students can watch it over before their next assignment.

<u>Examples from the University of Edinburgh for new ways of giving feedback</u>

<u>Useful issue of Centre of Bioscience, HEA UK newsletter showing examples of whole-class feedback</u>