City, University of London, 3rd Learning and Teaching Exchange,

Turning the Tables: Listening, and Learning from a Student Perspective

May 2021 Online

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Session 5, Structure and Usage of Coursework

The transcript contained in this document represents the written form of Chads experience with a different method of coursework. In this presentation, Chad talks about coursework and passes on the presentation to Dr. Sarah Sayce a visiting lecturer at city who brought a different form of coursework for students.

The recording from which this transcript originates, [Our Turn to Teach](https://mediaspace.city.ac.uk/media/Tips%20for%20Teaching%2C%203rd%20City%20Learning%20and%20Teaching%20Exchange%2C%2028th%20April%202021/1_mhlm4jp4) can be accessed directly for an audio version.

Speaker Descriptions

Susannah: Susannah Quinsee [AVP Educational Development and Director at the Learning Enhancement and Development (LEaD) team] - Moderator

Raqqaiyah: Raqqaiyah Javaid [VP Education - representing the Students’ Union (SU)]

Lisa: Lisa- Presentation moderator

Chad: Chad Greenblatt – Investment and Financial Risk Management student at the Business School.

Sarah: Professor Sarah Sayce- Visiting Lecturer at the business school for Introduction to Real Estate Investment.

1. Introduction [Begins at 0:00]

Raqqaiyah: Thanks Susannah, I can introduce the next presentation which is going to be from chad Greenblatt who is a city student, and he did the presentation with Sarah Sayce who is a visiting lecturer. They’re going to be covering structure and usage of coursework and the presentation will be supported by Lisa. So, I will handover to Lisa.

Lisa: All right, so I am just going to select it and hopefully play the presentation.

2: Start of Presentation [Begins at 0:32]

[First slide titled: Coursework for teaching assessment] [Begins at 0:32]

Chad: My name is Chad Greenblatt. I am a stage 2 (Second year) student and representative for investment and financial risk management at the business school. Unfortunately, I cannot come live in this event today because I have some medical appointment, but I will be presenting to you from this pre-recorded video. So, I wanted to discuss today the effective use of coursework for teaching and assessment so let’s get started.

[Second slide titled: What is coursework?] [Begins at 1:00]

Chad: Do first, what is coursework? Coursework is obviously a part of assessment that are set by lecturers for students to assess them on their work as well as their progress along the way. The coursework is set in a multitude of ways such as an essay, a midterm test, a group test, or an activity. And this varies from module to module. And its normally worth a percentage of the total mark that is going to be assessed.

[Third slide titled: What is the objective of coursework] [Begins at 1:29]

Chad: So, what is the objective of coursework? So, we can look at both perspectives, there is the teaching perspective and the student perspective. From a teaching perspective you want to gain an insight into how the students are learning, how they are doing, you also want to soften their workload by taking off a percentage that’s going to be the total exam and setting it as a coursework (students usually tend to have more amount of time and lesser pressure in performing a coursework). You also want to set something that is going to encourage participation especially in an online environment which we have been in a year or more. That’s important. And from a student point of view here, it’s needed to gain knowledge and to test your knowledge of how you have been learning so far before your full exam revision before the exam has been set and how is your knowledge sitting at the point. You also want to be rewarded for your participation and the effort that you’re taking along the way by going to the webinars or seminars or tutorials and engaging every week. You want to be rewarded for that in some way or form. And, the coursework should help you and most of the students feel like it’s going to help them towards the exam and that’s amazing as well.

[Fourth slide titled: where does coursework fail?] [Begins at 2:35]

Chad: However, coursework does not always work out exactly as planned and especially when you take a standard coursework and put it in any module and don’t change it, then there can be failings. And especially when it comes to the lack of guidance that is given to the students as to how they should perform, how they should answer the assessment criteria and fulfil it to the get the most maximum marks. As well as when students don’t have an appropriate time set for them, they’ve only got one week to do an entire group assignment then that’s not going to work out for anyone as well. Moreover, the lack of feedback that some students receive on their work, sometimes it can be great, and you can get a lot of feedback that’s helpful and gets you ready for the exam. However, it can often fall short of what students really would like to know where they didn’t perform well and where did they perform well is not essential. Further the coursework which does not help with participation, I think it’s essential in time to push participation and get students involved.

[Fifth slide titled: What coursework style worked well and why?] [Begins at 3:41]

Chad: So, I encountered this style of coursework this past term by a visiting lecturer called Professor Sayce and she taught Introduction to Real Estate Investment, so I am going to pass on to her and she’s going to give some pre-recorded bullet points.

[Sixth slide titled: Introduction to Real Estate Investment- A reflection on the coursework model used] [Begins at 4:01]

Sarah: Hello, just to introduce myself, I am Sarah Sayce and I am a sessional lecturer with City and I run an optional module for the 2nd year entitled Introduction to Real Estate Investment, I have been asked by the course representatives to say a few words about the method I have used for assessing coursework so here it goes.

[Seventh Slide titled: Agenda] [Begins at 4:26]

Sarah: I am just going to cover the background and the challenge system (method of coursework) as I have called it, and what it involved, then how I assess the challenges and a few takeaways. As well as other ideas of how I think it could be improved if it were to run again in this format next year. Then the course representative will give his perspective.

[Eighth slide titled: Background to what was set] [Begins at 4:50]

Sarah: So, starting off the background. This is a standard 15 credit module, 30% coursework and 70% exam. It runs in Spring Term, and it was designed for lecture delivery when I first took it over some years ago and I added in a couple of tutorials, primarily to help students to prepare for the examination. This year of course everything is different because everything has been online which is challenging everyone, and I think we accept that. Now the course director was very keen to make sure that we keep track of student engagement when we were not actually seeing them and to make that an effective management. A request was made that students should be required to submit something every week. Now I had a concern initially about the student workload on this, also lecturer workload because things like multiple choice, this module does not really lend itself to computer assessed quizzes.

So, I was reluctant to do that, and I tried to think of something else. So, the aim was to devise something that would meet the objective for judging engagement, but which could collectively act as coursework and would act as an effective preparation for students for their examination and of course their examinations are partly calculation and partly essay so another reason why I did want a multiple choice because that’s the problem we were going to face. But I was very aware of how to meet the need to contain workload, and that initially presented an enormous amount of challenge for me, and I think for the students.

[Ninth slide titled: The Challenge System- what it involved] [Begins at 6:34]

Sarah: So, what in fact I did was to set what we call a series of challenge questions. So, question 1 or 2 each week based on the lecture or tutorial for that well. Some of them were essay style so like mini exam questions or it could be a calculation or sometimes there were 1 of the each. The actual output the student was making for me was the equivalent of around about 400 words a week. So that’s a chunky thing of about 4000 words equivalents for the whole module. It would be more than it would be for a standard assessment and that’s important. Though, all the questions were published up front in week 1 of the module so students could see what’s coming up. Each week we had an interactive session and each week I would go through what the challenge for that week was, so that they could have that in mind. So, they went through the rest of the interactive session and the recorded session. Then one week later Monday they would have to hand in something through Moodle, upload it online and that was very good support from learning, support that helped me organise all that.

In the following week, so which is two weeks after I had explained the challenge to the students, I would then go through it again with an outline answer and invite questions on it. And at that point no individual feedback existed, so they had the feedback in terms of effective model answers, and I said please go back, have a look at the model answer and see how your answer compared with the one that was on Moodle. So, the intention was that week by week there was a build-up of worked examples for the students that would help them in preparation for the exam. Obviously, we are not at the exam yet so we will have to see the pudding on that one.

[Tenth slide titled: Assessing the Challenges] [Begins at 8:33]

Sarah: Now the challenge was that there was no way I could assess that amount of work on a regular basis, and it would be impractical considering the number of students on the module and the resource space to mark everyone. So, what I said in the initial briefing, and this was approved by the university, that students were told four of their weekly challenges would be chosen for summative assessment. They would not know which four until after I had done the assessment. So, they were handing it in blind as to whether that would be on formative work on which they got group feedback or whether it was summative work when it would be counted towards their module mark. What I did as an encouragement for engagement and as a reward because there was a lot of work involved for them was that any student handing in all ten challenges would be rewarded an additional 10% of the mark as a reward for their engagement. Now as a module leader I kept a weekly record, a big spreadsheet on who did and did not submit the work. Which also meant that the intervention by the course officers if people were not submitting, I think it worked very well and the approximate result has been that 10% of the students did not engage despite attempts to highlight that it would impact their grade. 10% did not submit every week, some had health issues and whatever and they did not get their bonus. 80% had earned their bonus which I think is a good measure of engagement. The mark analysis that I have now done revealed that only two students who had fully engaged qualified to achieve a pass mark in their coursework. The large number than usual have obtained 70% plus so we can really give marks at the top. That was in reflection that they did the work on all their assessed pieces as well.

[Eleventh slide titled: Key Takeaways and Ideas for Improvement] [Begins at 10:38]

Sarah: So, what I take away from this is that as an engagement mechanism it has been successful. The interesting thing is it did not significantly increase the attendance at interactive session and still did not get full attendance, but the students were handing the work in. Now the monitoring and marking burden has not been less than a conventional coursework but what I have got is the early indication of what students have been finding difficult by just quickly skimming through what they handed in week by week. I did not mark it but just went through so I could pick up where the problems were which helped to inform how I did the revision sessions. So, would I do it again? Yes, I think I would. It has been hard work but of course the problem with saying I am not going to tell which ones answers I am marking meant I could not go back and say look I marked this week because they would know that well that’s one, they could start to make assumptions as to which ones were coming up. I think if doing it again, I would probably want to break it into two and say right the first half session, the first 5 modules, I am going to mark 2 out of these and then try to mark those and hand those marks back. And the reason why if the student is making the same mistake repeatedly then of course they did not get feedback until I had marked all of them at the end and was ready to give them their collective mark. So, I think that someone would want to improve it and I would also constantly try and remind them of the assessment criteria. Because it is quite clear that a lot of them did not really read that, and I did not put that up early enough, so I made an adjustment in the marking process. Hopefully it provided a great way to help students consolidate as they have progressed through the programme. I will now pass this over to the course representative Chad who will provide his perspective on whether he found the challenge helpful. Thank you.

[Twelfth slide titled: From a student’s perspective] [Begins at 12:41]

Chad: So, thank you to Dr. Sarah Sayce for that feedback and guidance. I really appreciate it. So, as you see there was basically assessment set every week and students had to do that before the deadline. If they, did it before the deadline every single week then they got a bonus and then four random weeks were chosen for marking. So, from a student’s perspective the reason that it worked so well and that students enjoyed it because the questions were first of all in exam style so the students knew that this is the sort of exam question they will get and this is how it is portrayed and this is how I must be marked. The workload was very manageable, even though over the 10 weeks, we wrote over 4000 words. Because it was split up every week in manageable chunks, it did not take much time every week to do it in addition to reading and every other work. But it was very manageable. The engagement was well because of the 10% bonus that was awarded and people did appreciate that and as you can see over 80% or so did get that bonus. However, there are still drawbacks, no assessment criteria are perfect, there was no instant feedback week from week or even halfway to see what your progress is, where are you going. This sort of made it hard for you to assess your progression and your grade that you were going to be getting and where you are falling short every week, such as forgetting to include reading materials or examples.

[Thirteenth slide titled: is it perfect]

Chad: So obviously at the top of it or for some modules it can work well. For some maths modules maybe, it would not work exactly but you can take the style of setting small coursework every single week and then only grading a certain percentage of them and rewarding for participation so that helps by the students, helps prep them for their exam, rewards their engagement. However, some can see it as difficult because you must do something every week and in this case with the amount of participation it did not really show.

[Fourteenth slide titled: What have we learned] [Begins at 14:47]

Chad: So, we have learned that it is so essential that you need to manage the workload effectively whilst gaining knowledge in the module and assessment, so students were hugely appreciate being awarded for their participation. If they are keen enough to make sure that every week, they are doing the work diligently every week then they should be rewarded for doing so. And finally, coursework is not for assessing knowledge, it can also be used for teaching. So, thank you for your time, I hope this has not been too long. It is my 3rd time recording it, so if you have any questions please feel free to email me, my email is on the screen (chad.greenblatt@cass.city.ac.uk) and thank you as well to Dr. Sarah Sayce for giving the feedback guidance and everything. Thank you very much.

[Presentation finished at 15:39]

Susannah: Thank you Lisa for facilitating that.

Lisa: No Problem, I think the sound might have been a bit dodgy at times, but hopefully I was that the slides sort of spoke for themselves so yeah. It was playing as bad for me so there was nothing, I could really do but hopefully it was good enough.

Susannah: Great, Raqqiayah did you have any thoughts or reflections on that piece before we finish and move on.

Raqqaiyah: Yeah, I thought that the challenge system that Sarah was talking about would be something would be really appreciated by sort of a wider group of students. That sort of system of having mini exams for lecture material is something that really chimes with a lot of student feedback that the student union has been getting so those sorts of repeated opportunities to test your knowledge is something that students have found helpful. So yeah, it would kind of be difficult to take questions on this one but those are sort of my thoughts, and I am happy to take any comments anyone else might have. So, I found it to be really useful and it would be good to see that system being replicated by other academics and other schools and departments.

Susannah: Yes, absolutely. Does anybody have any comments or reflections that they wanted to bring into us before we move into our closing panel discussion?

Susannah: Things may come up in the chat as we go along, there is a lot of information to digest.

[End of presentation]