

Interactive Oral as method of assessment

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Interactive Oral (IO) as method of assessment

Dr Eaton from Kansas State University said:

"I bring them in, and look them in the eye," to learn exactly where each student is doing well or struggling."

"I can figure out in five to 10 minutes what they know and what they don't know," she said. "I don't need to give them a multiple-choice exam, where they're going to go to Google, and probably not learn the material."

Paul Basken, 2020 in THE

What is an interactive oral?

An interactive oral is an example of an authentic alternative assessment type that allows the student to communicate their learning and understanding verbally, thus having an opportunity to showcase their skills development and directly related to employability.

By definition:

"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)." (O'Riordan, 2021)

Traditional vivas, however, tends to be more of an oral interview where students asked questions to defend their work. Interactive oral assessment is considered to have great potential to alleviate or mitigate the concerns about the authenticity of a student(s) work, thus addressing questions related to the authenticity of a student's work if plagiarism and contract cheating is suspected. In an era of increased concerns related to assessment security, contract cheating, etc. interactive orals can contribute to making assessment more secure. So rather than checking suspected misconduct, by introducing interactive orals as the assessment type, all students work can potentially be authenticated. (Dawson, etal, 2020; Dawson, 2021)

Interactive orals, can be an alternative to the traditional or online exam written exam and can thus be considered to not only be an approach to authenticate assessment, but also embraces the principles guiding assessment towards being authentic and inclusive in nature. (Villarroel etal, 2018; Thomas & May, 2010) For example, Villarroel et al. (2018:841) argued that authentic assessment *"aims to integrate what happens in the classroom with employment, replicating the tasks and performance standards typically faced by professionals in the world of work."*

Key drivers for the implementation of interactive oral as assessment type

An Interactive Oral is **not a question and answer test**, but rather an exchange which draws upon the student's understanding, and creates a setting in which they can evidence their learning and skills development.

An interactive oral should not be a traditional question and answer test, but to allow students to draw on their understanding to demonstrate and apply key concepts learned in a verbal manner. This type of assessment is more authentic and can help link different assessment tasks together, in assessing both Course and Module learning outcomes. Due to the authentic nature of an interactive oral assessment, it can be an efficient, effective manner allowing the students to demonstrate the development of their employability skills.

Although interactive oral are often seen as time consuming and labour intensive, it not only help addressing issues related to plagiarism and contract cheating, but can be implemented equally effective, to assess group work in the form of group interactive oral. (See guidance below.)

An interactive oral can help both the student and the tutor as it supports the verification of a students' learning and understanding:

- Can help to check if it was the students own work, or to clarify their understanding.
- But also allows the students to defend and argue their case.
- The student cannot “cheat” as the interactive oral is an “in person” form of assessment.

Examples of interactive oral assessment

To illustrate, see below a brief overview of examples of assessment types that may lean itself to introducing interactive oral assessment:

- Scenario-based oral defence of, for example a report or investigation
- Scenario-based oral defence of a group task, e.g. a group report or investigation where all group members participate
- Scenario-based performance review after group project, so the individual is taking part in the interactive oral assessment
- Scenario-based oral linked to a simulation
- Scenario-based oral linking assessment tasks in a module together – feedforward opportunity
- Scenario-based oral linked to all previous module (or course) assessment – as a form of an integrated assessment task within a semester (capstone)
- Scenario-based oral linked to a part of the Course content

Adapted from Griffith University, Learning Futures (2020)

Group work and interactive orals

Interactive orals are not limited to the assessment of an individual student, but can be conducted with groups of students where group work was the form of assessment undertaken.

Considerations when conducting interactive orals for group work

Decisions need to be made with regards to whether marking will be conducted, either grading of the group, the individual students or a combination of both. This is dependent on the learning outcomes, and how the assessment was designed, but ideally each student should have an individual mark assigned as per guidance on designing group work assessment. The assessment criteria and rubric, thus how marking will be conducted, should clearly communicated to students.

Conducting group interactive orals, allows for scalability in the use of interactive orals, in particular where tutors have large groups. It also helps with the development of confidence of an individual as they perform (respond) as one of a group (team) thus gradually can become familiar with engaging and performing better in future interactive orals.

Designing effective interactive oral design

Sotiriadou etal (2019) proposed some key **objectives** and **characteristics** for effectively designing interactive orals. She proposed, that the key **characteristics** of interactive oral should ideally include:

- The scaffolding of assessment tasks that is well supported
- Scenarios or case study types of assessment, as well as being an authentic assessment type
- Alignment to Course as well as Module Learning Outcomes
- Assessment that is accessible and inclusive in nature

The key objectives for implementing an IO should then be focused on achieving:

- Student engagement
- Employability
- Academic Integrity

The figure below shows a framework proposed by Sotiriadou et al (2019) illustrating interactive orals as a form of authentic assessment design.

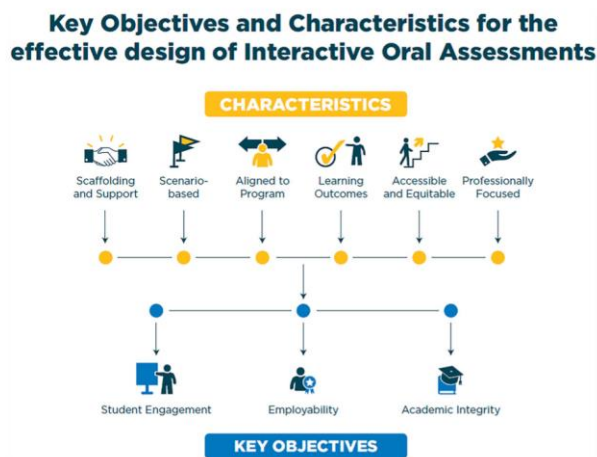


Figure 1. Proposed Framework for Authentic Assessment Design: Interactive Oral Assessment as Authentic Assessment Design.

Figure from Sotiriadou et al (2019, p.13)

Implementing interactive oral

Preparing for an interactive oral

Interactive orals should be part of an integrated module assessment design, clearly considering Course and Module Learning Outcomes. This include the design of the assessment criteria and rubric in assessing the interactive oral.

Introducing an interactive oral, allows for a scaffolding approach to assessment, particularly if the interactive oral involves allowing the student to bring in evidence and resources to support their presentations/argument during the interactive oral.

Interactive orals can be conducted online or f2f, and can allow for immediate feedback to the student(s). Recording of interactive oral allows for giving feedback post the interactive oral after moderation of marking has taken place, thus ensuring the implementation of appropriate quality assurance practices in marking and moderation.

Some institutions have opted for different formats of interactive oral, meaning that the interactive oral can be between the tutor and the student or between students. Having a recording of the interactive oral, allows for marking post the interactive oral.

Have clear assessment criteria and rubrics

Careful consideration needs to be given to designing the assessment criteria and rubric, should be informed by the Course and Module learning outcomes and where possible, can be co-designed by students or at least shared beforehand to ensure a good understanding of the criteria.

Ideally, when conducting interactive orals, consider how to include criteria (rubrics) that reward strong arguments, insightful responses and defensible views and not really focusing on the quality of the spoken language. This in itself, will help designing a more inclusive assessment practice.

Typical interactive oral timeline

Give consideration to the length of the interactive oral and equivalence to written work and hours of student work. Griffiths University, Business School (2020), proposed that a 10 min interactive oral is equivalent to a +/- 4000 word written assessment task and the MIT (2017) example, proposed a 15 to 20 minute interactive oral.

When booking timeslots, allow an additional 5 min for marking (using the criteria and rubric), for example arrange booking slots, that will accommodate a 10 minute interactive oral, and 5 min for writing feedback, thus allow for 15 minute booking slots. When new to the process, consider building time in to deal with potential issues related to technology, etc.

For tutors - Ideally, all markers need to be invited to training session, similar as what typically will be arranged prior to commencing marking on any other format of assessment. Ensure all parties, including the students have the same understanding of interpreting the assessment criteria and rubrics.

For students - Orientate and prepare students on how to engage with this interactive oral, this can be done by sharing assessment guidance and briefing videos, exemplars and criteria (rubrics). Where possible, offer skills development workshops to prepare the students in becoming confident in taking part in interactive orals.

Conducting the interactive oral

Choice of e-tool - Make early decisions with regards to the e-tools to use when conducting the interactive oral, particularly if students will now attend in person. Ensure students are familiar with the e-tool, and check capacity for recording the conversation for feedback and moderation purposes. Recommend using tools students have used regularly, such as MS Teams and or ZOOM.

Verify student(s) identification – you may need to request the student(s) to identify themselves, to verify their identity.

Time keeping - Recommend the use of a timer, visible to both tutor and student(s).

Multiple screens - If possible, use 2 screens, one for interactive oral conversation, and one for the marking (criteria and rubric doc).

Asking questions in an interactive oral:

The type of questions asked in an interactive oral, needs to be clearly considered, and is also seen as a method of prompting. Prepare the questions in advance, and share with peer tutors involved in assessing the interactive oral. Agree beforehand the level of additional questions (prompt questions) that may be asked as part of the conversation. See guidance below with regards to

preparing questions and the nature of follow up (prompt) questions. At MIT (2017), the guidance is to ensure a well-structured conversation, seen as a “bow on the class”, so bringing the learning in the module together, and typical of a capstone assessment.

Questioning (prompting) can range from a minimum (or neutral) level of questioning, but consideration needs to be given to not let the level of questioning (prompting) threaten the validity of the assessment in particular if it is a high stakes assessment. See below some types of questioning ranging from minimum to maximum levels of prompting.

Types of questioning (prompting):

- Presenting the task/question using specific wording on a script
- Repeating information, can be paraphrasing the original question (prompt) or steering the student back to the original question (prompt)
- Clarifying questions asking the student to be more specific
- Probing questions to establish how well the student understands a specific area of knowledge (*may threaten validity*)
- Leading questions that invites an alternative response (*may threaten validity*)

Suggested questions/prompts to consider:

- Can you tell me a bit more about...?
- In your view, what would you recommend...?
- What would you say led you to making your decision/recommendation?
- Did you consider.....
- Just to check, you said, ... Can you explain your reasons for ...
- I hear your point, but it is not clear to me...
- I would welcome any additional thoughts you have on...
- I would be interested to hear your reasons/rationale for...
- What would you say your view is on...?

Adapted from: O’Riordan (2021)

Recommendations from experts in examining medical education suggested some guiding principles in the use questioning (prompting) in interactive orals. Taking these principles into account, can help address issues such as student bias, having large numbers of students taking part in interactive orals, and help building confidence in tutors conducting these conversations:

- Strive for neutrality in the interactions with the student(s)
- Be consistent and transparent in how questions (prompts) will be used for all students
- Training and clear briefing of assessors in asking questions (and prompting) is recommended
- Consider regular reflection on how questions (prompts) are used by multiple assessors

Adapted from: Pearce & Chiavaroli (2020)

What happens after the Interactive Oral?

Similar to other forms of assessment, moderation of marking is highly recommended. The student should receive feedback and have view of the marking decisions, informed by the assessment criteria and rubric, Ideally a debrief on the performance in general on the Interactive Oral is recommended even if this is done to the whole class in general, to the student specifically and can be either in class or an asynchronous manner.

Worth checking with the students to get their feedback on the experience as it has value on informing the tutors in planning future interactive orals, but also of value to the students in preparing for future interactive orals.

Examples of interactive oral assessment

In the section below, some examples of practice from other Higher Education Institutions will be shared. For examples at the wider CU Group, see **Appendix one**.

University College London

At UCL (2019), the recommendation is to be a combination of the interactive oral with other modes of assessment. This can be:

- An oral presentation of a project report or dissertation.
- An oral presentation of posters, diagrams, or museum objects.
- A commentary on a practical exercise.
- Or questions to follow up written tests, examinations, or essays.

Griffith University Business School examples

In the examples below (Griffith University, 2020) in the wider Business School, students, in most cases, were assessed on **scenarios** normally based on case studies or simulations in which students engaged.

Assessment type	Description	Nature of module
Scenario-based oral defence of a report	Client interview – 10 min, 25% weighting Individual assessment	Level 5 Comparative Management
Scenario-based oral linked to all Course assessment	Job interview – 10 min, 25% weighting Individual assessment	Level 5 Sport Management Principles
Scenario-based performance review after group project	Retrospective interview – 15 min, 25% weighting Individual assessment	Level 7 Advanced HR Development
Scenario-based group defence of a project placement	Annual shareholder’s meeting – 30 min, 35% weighting Individual assessment	Level 6 Hotel Management Operations Management (Capstone Module)
Scenario-based media statement & questioning	Media statement on a Sport Organisation’s long term recovery plan and media response – 30% weighting Individual assessment	Level 5 Sport Information
Scenario-based time released case study	Response to a crisis in a Sport Organisation to 4 different stakeholders – 35% weighting Individual assessment	Level 6 Contemporary Issues in Sport
Scenario-based group defence of a pitch	Defence of a pitch to a facilities operations management stakeholders group – 15 min, 15% weighting Individual assessment	Level 7 Managing Sport Venues & Facilities

Scaffolding assessment through interactive orals – An example

More specific, a discipline based examples at Griffiths Business School is that in the Discipline, Economics. A scaffolding assessment approach was introduced in an Economics module in the undergraduate course and unfold as below:

Discipline: Economics

Learning outcome: Developing oral communication skills in future Economists

Oral exam:

Level 4 – Communication to a friend/ family member – to reteach a concept learned, e.g. a dinner table conversation.

Level 5 – Communication via the media to the public – to communicate a concept to a generalist audience, e.g. interviewed by a journalist.

Level 6 – Communication to Government/Private – more complex data, e.g. briefing a member of parliament.

What is assessed? The assessment criteria included:

Logical sequence of argument, coherence in response, relation to theory, current examples, development of economic vocabulary, etc.

Appendix one – CU examples

Examples of current practices in conducting interactive orals at CU, including the wider CU Group will be shared in this appendix one.

CU GROUP example – Degree Course Policing.

Module: Domestic Abuse

Module code: 209POL/ 209POLSC/ 209POLEL

Module leaders: Tracy Bradford and Nick Clarke

In one of the modules on the Degree Course, Policing, namely, students have two Coursework elements, where Coursework one, involves an interactive oral.

Coursework one:

The task: Group Practical – prepare a briefing in response to an incident. The group will receive information as a scenario, based on a domestic abuse and the information shared by a call handler when the abuse was reported. The group response to a panel will outline the actions planned, the rationale for the decision making. The group are expected to provide explanation and evidence informing their decision making and will be allowed to ask a minimum of questions to clarify the call handler information. The panel will be tutors, peers and police staff.

Coursework two:

The CW2, builds on CW1 and involves the investigation of the scenario in CW1. This is an individual task, that includes a:

- Statement from your observations of the victim and the crime scene
- Completion of reporting documentation (DASH)
- Identification of relevant factors with regards to the incident and victim.

The assessment criteria is based on the generic assessment criteria and rubric grid in use in the CU Group.

Reflective observations: Module leader – Nick Clarke

“The strength and weakness of these assignments are that they are beholden on a strong CW1. If a student struggles with CW1 it is very difficult to recover on CW2.” (Nick Clarke, 16/03/2021)

Hannelie Du Plessis-Walker
2021

"I recall they were problematic, not least due to the unusual and entertaining responses we sometimes received." (Nick Clarke, 16/03/2021)

Follow up considerations:

- That example is of a f2f oral – consider how can this be done online given the current restrictions following the pandemic but also to make it more manageable – consider here issues in terms of booking the orals, recording orals (for moderation), etc.
- Consider what guidance should be given to students with regards to preparing for the engagement in CW1.
- Consider what tools were to be used for the interactive oral and how this can be recorded for moderation purposes.
- Consider how much time the group of students should be given to present their response. Think also of the time given for the group to collate a response. How to deal with a group member that did not speak (or contributed)? May this be more effective if it is an individual interactive oral?
- What guidance (training) were given to the panel (assessors) with regards to assessing the group interactive oral?
- Is the assessment criteria appropriate? How may this be designed to be more relevant to the task? (see learning outcomes)

CU, HLS example – Nursing Associate Foundation Degree

Module: Applied Nursing Science

Module code: F4004FD OSCE

Skill (OSCE focus): Diabetes, Neuro and Post –op assessment

Module leaders: Rija Bobby

Preparing the OSCE assessment:

The module team prepared the scenario and the role of the tutor is clearly outlined in particular where the OSCE was conducted online during the pandemic. Clear follow-up questions was shared with the tutor and communicated to the student during the OSCE.

The tutor (assessor) had clear guidance as to what is to be assessed, as well as what are appropriate prompt questions.

Students are trained in assessing various conditions, but they are only assessed on any one on the day of the OSCE. A random task allocation is implemented, (pick a number from a box on the day of exam).

The assessment criteria consisted of a detailed break-down of all the tasks to be completed by the student and to be stated as Criteria met, yes/no. No grading associated with within the assessment criteria.

The student is provided the OSCE criteria based on which they are assessed beforehand.

Tutors were guided to limit the number of prompt questions to a maximum of 2, if required.

Preparing the students for the OSCE – A detailed step by step PowerPoint presentation was shared with students to prepare for the event during training sessions. Additional **practice sessions** with proxy scenarios are provided 1-2 weeks prior to OSCE.

Reflective observations: Module leader Rija Bobby

"I think, what makes OSCEs difficult and nerve wrecking for students is the 'live' feature of it and them 'thinking on their feet' when they are being closely watched." (Rija Bobby, 17/03/2021)

CU, Counselling Degree

CU GROUP – where based? CUC

Module: Social, legal and ethical framework context in Counselling

Module code: 112HSC

Module leaders: Amrita Narang (Course lead), Punam Farmah (Module lead)

Student numbers: 22

Coursework

One of two sets of coursework.

The assessment is a series of 10 questions based on ethical framework, and legislation. The questions range from testing knowledge from the BACP framework to application of framework in practice. For example, a short case study scenario, involving a client dilemma description. The student engage in a 15 minute interactive oral, where they will be guided through scaffolding of questions (random order) where student have to demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of given scenario in terms of the ethical framework and legal requirements in counselling. Students can demonstrate their understanding by linking their response to learning through previous class room activities and skills practice sessions.

Preparing the students for the interactive oral:

Classroom activities and skills practice sessions similar to the case study scenario will form part of the students learning journey. Students can also bring in reference to their own experiences of therapy sessions undertaken as part of the overall course requirement, thus reference to their own experiences as “client” *.

Students engage in skills practice as part of their teaching/learning sessions to practice skills, and this also offers opportunity to link back practice to the BACP framework, professional boundaries, and legislation.

**All students are required to undertake 30 hours of personal therapy, and engage with a minimum of 10 hours before going on a placement in the second year of study.*

How is interactive oral conducted?

Pre-pandemic, the interactive oral was conducted face-to-face, but during the pandemic, this was conducted as live, ZOOM synchronous engagement.

The assessment criteria:

The generic assessment criteria for CU Group was used as criteria and rubric, but consideration will be given to design more task related criteria and rubrics in the future.

Marking and moderation practices:

Vivas are double marked, and standardisation meeting is undertaken to discuss the questions, and plausible responses from students. These are recorded for EE purposes.

Reflective observations: (Tutor reflections...Amrita Narang)

Reflections by the tutor noted that there is definitely scope for more specific assessment criteria. Further reflections referred to the fact that given the nature of the module, it may come across as a “dry” area of study. Therefore it is pertinent that formative assessment type activities are included through the 6 weeks of study. Although this is a step away from exams, the time pressure does get to students- so perhaps need consider how to dilute that pressure.

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