University of
South Australia

Developing UniSA's Authentic Assessment Project Plan

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to outline the approach to delivering Action 2.2 of the Academic Enterprise Plan – UniSA's Authentic Assessment Project.

AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this document is UniSA Senior Staff, Academic Board, and Academic Unit Teaching and Learning Strategy Groups.

BACKGROUND

Good assessment practices should be at the centre of our course and program design[1]. For academics, assessment is used to assess learning against defined course objectives, while for students, assessment acts as a key motivator driving study behaviour – *students learn what they think they will be tested on*[2] – and we take advantage of this behaviour through the use of frequent low-value assessments. Such assessments, however, can fragment learning within a course and fail to make critical connections required for learning at a program level. Shifting this narrative towards one where assessment activities generate excitement for learning in both staff and students is the motivator behind the UniSA Authentic Assessment Project (the AAP). Authentic learning activities as assessment lead to richer staff-student engagement, contributing to meaningful feedback, and better learning outcomes. Furthermore, assessment is effective when students see the task or activity as plausible, meaningful and relevant – authentic with integrity and legitimacy.

DISCUSSION

The Academic Enterprise Plan (AEP) Strategic Priority 2 – Leading with Our Programs – summarises the University's commitment to strengthening our investment in contemporary curriculum design and delivery in face-to-face, online, and blended modalities. AEP Action 2.2 states:

> *To support the success and progression of our learners, and prepare students for their professional careers, we will move towards more authentic forms of assessment that facilitate attainment of graduate qualities and job-ready skills.*

In January 2020 the ATN published a joint statement on Authentic Assessment, co-developed by UniSA (Appendix 1). The Statement states that *authentic assessment is core to enabling students to become the work-ready graduates Australia needs. It focuses on realistic practice, scenarios, and contexts, and*

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develops students' graduate capabilities and evaluative judgement, preparing them to face the challenges of the future world of work[3].

Through the AAP we aim to:
1. embed authentic assessment approaches to all UniSA coursework, in collaboration with alumni, program advisory groups, and industry representatives, and
2. provide a programmatic view of the use of authentic assessment at UniSA to ensure our graduates have the necessary employability skills for industry, in addition to enterprising skills that comes from a higher education degree – ethical decision making, innovative and critical thinking, problem solving, evaluative judgement – positioning them as future leaders in the changing industrial and societal landscape.

PROJECT BENEFITS

UniSA will lead the delivery of high-quality, accessible course design, and fit-for-purpose authentic assessment – a differentiator for UniSA graduates within the State and Sector. Our approach to curriculum delivery and assessment design will act to motivate and reward learning across our student cohort.

Staff benefits
- Design and deployment of authentic assessment to contextualise courses more effectively, and provide students with a realistic connection with their future professional activities.
- Creation and curation of high-quality learning activities (summative and formative assessments), creating additional time for assessment feedback and student consultation.
- Develop a culture of quality assessments and academic integrity.
- Opportunities for ongoing professional development and career progression.
- Increased industry collaboration.

Student benefits
- Assessments that more accurately consider the required knowledge and skills in professional settings, leading to improved motivation and engagement in learning.
- Improved assessment feedback that is connected to professional practice.
- Assessment activities that are aligned to industry needs, enabling students to develop the professional skills required to become work-ready graduates.
- Improved opportunity for personal growth and development associated with a higher education degree.

Employer benefits
- Graduates that will join the workforce with skills aligned to the needs of industry.

APPROACH & SCHEDULE

This project will take a *One Team* approach to review assessment practices across all UniSA programs by growing a culture that supports the successful delivery of the project, where all staff share a common definition of authentic assessment and a shared view of success, and are empowered at the local level to drive change in assessment practices. The project will be delivered across four streams, each led by a separate working group, which will run concurrently as summarised in the tables below.

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[3] ATN Joint Statement on Authentic Assessment - https://www.atn.edu.au/news-and-events/latest-news/atn-joint-statement-on-authentic-assessment/

All project streams will commence in early 2022, and progress will be managed by the Project Steering Group.

The workload associated with each stream will vary across the project. The streams are:
1. Authentic Assessment Network
2. Assessment25
3. Implementation
4. Policy Update

Stream 1 – Authentic Assessment Network
Achieving the objectives of the AAP will require a shared understanding of authentic assessment – examples of authentic assessment, the role of feedback in authentic assessment, and promoting academic integrity in the design of authentic assessments. The development of an Authentic Assessment network will provide scope to support skill and resource development, sharing of best practice within UniSA and nationally and internationally, and increasing opportunity for recognition and reward through our existing grants and awards scheme and UniSA's Professional Experience Program (PEP).

Stream 1 has interdependences with AEP actions 1.4 – Teacher Development Programs, 1.10 – Unstoppable Grants and Awards, and 2.1 – Enhanced Student Learning Experiences.

Key deliverables of Stream 1:
- Authentic Assessment network – community of practice to showcase and champion authentic assessment across UniSA, building on existing forums such as the TIU Breakfast Session and T&L Symposium
- TIU-led professional development resources to facilitate authentic assessment thinking at both a course and program level
- Teaching and learning grants with a focus on authentic assessment

Activity	Completed by
Authentic Assessment network - opportunities for collaboration and PEP communicated to the academic community	Life of project
Revised professional development aligned to authentic assessment and academic integrity	End 2022
Teaching and learning grants scheme aligned to the AAP	Mid 2022 for 2023 funding

Stream 2 – Assessment25
Assessment25 will lay the foundation for how we capture and share information about our assessments, both internally as part of our review process, and externally to our key stakeholders – students and industry.

A key deliverable of this stream, which will contribute to and form the basis of the implementation strategy (refer to Stream 3), is *Assessment Scenario* statements. These statements will be a form of self-assessment of course assessments led by Academic Unit Teaching & Learning Strategy Groups (TLSGs), with support from Academic Unit Deans of Programs and the Stream 2 working group. Assessment Scenario statements will articulate the authenticity of each assessment within a course across a program, making the connection between assessment and professional competencies explicit to both the student and teaching staff (this includes academics and casuals).

Key deliverables of Stream 2:
- Definition of authentic assessment at UniSA
- *Assessment Scenarios* – statement of authentic assessment
    - Academic Unit self-assessment of course assessments led by Academic Unit Teaching and Learning Strategy Groups (TLSGs) facilitated by Stream 2 Working Group
- PCMS enhancements to include revised assessment types approved by Academic Board (2016) and ability to capture the Assessment Scenario
- Review of the Curriculum Innovation Process (CIP) and program Evaluation and Re-accreditation Report (ERR) to include reporting of authentic assessments
- Assessment mapping
    - assessment data within courses objectives
    - course learning outcomes to program learning outcomes
    - assessment data within a course and between core courses within a program

Activity	Completed by
Develop a working definition of authentic assessment at UniSA	Mid 2022
Academic Unit-led *Assessment Scenarios,* facilitated by the AAP Stream 2 Working Group. Scenario statement will be recorded via PCMS	End 2022
Review the ongoing role of Academic Unit led CIP discussions, and ASSQC ERR process in sustaining authentic assessment practices beyond 2025	Life of project
PCMS enhancements (commenced in 2021)	October 2022
Develop business case regarding teaching and learning data warehouse to facilitate high-quality teaching and learning reports and curriculum map	Mid 2022
Establish an interim virtual server to pilot assessment mapping for the AAP	Mid 2022
Consultation with internal stakeholders regarding course/program assessment maps	August 2022
Develop, refine, and seek feedback on assessment maps	Life of project
Develop business case for the replacement of our current curriculum management tool (PCMS end of life 2029) for implementation in 2025	End 2023

Stream 3 – Implementation

The implementation stream contains the actions required to communicate and support academics in achieving the aspiration of the AAP within our courses and programs. The AAP implementation model will be influenced by stakeholder consultations with staff, students, alumni, program advisory groups, and industry representatives. This will ensure high-quality assessments linked to the needs of our students and industry.

Key deliverables of Stream 3:
- Implementation model developed in consultation with Academic Units
- By 2025, all assessments at UniSA will be deemed as authentic based on the Assessment Scenario
- Authentic assessments will be scaffolded, increasing in complexity and authenticity towards the end of a program.

Activity	Completed by
Communication and showcase of authentic assessment at UniSA via corporate website, learn**online** site, presentations at TLSGs, and various events include TIU Brekky sessions and T&L Symposium	Life of project
Training and support to develop Assessment Scenarios	Mid 2022

Review and reporting of Assessment Scenarios through PCMS	Late 2022
Consultation with student body, Alumni, and industry regarding assessments at UniSA	Late 2022
Develop support model, based on Assessment Scenarios for triaging rollout of AAP in 2023	End 2022
Rollout of Authentic Assessment model - TIU at elbow support model - self-service model utilising TIU developed resources	2023-2025
Embed authentic assessment into ongoing practice, with reporting as part of the CIP and A-35 reviews	End of project

Stream 4 – Policy Update

To better guide our decisions and achieve the key objectives of the AAP, we will work to review and align existing policies, procedures and statements. This will ensure the University-wide investment towards more authentic and contemporary forms of assessment become embedded in practice.

Key deliverables of Stream 4:
- APPM policy review
  - Section 1 – Assessment Principles and Requirements
  - Section 3 – Moderation
  - Section 6 – Examination Procedures
  - Section 9 – Academic Integrity
- A–35 – Quality assurance and improvement: Programs, courses and teaching arrangements policy review
- Program Approval Manual (PAM) review

Policy review will be informed by benchmarking of equivalent policies from across the higher education sector, in addition to staff and student consultation.

Activity	Completed by
Benchmarking UniSA policies through lens of authentic assessment	Mid 2022
Stakeholder consultation	Mid 2022
Working group to draft recommendations for update of APPM Sections 1, 3, 6, and 9, the A-35 (including ERR), and PAM	October 2022
Approval for implementation in 2023	November 2022

INTERDEPENDENT AEP ACTIONS

- 1.4 – Teacher development programs
- 1.10 – T&L Grants & Awards with emphasis on Authentic Assessment
- 2.1 – Enhanced student learning experiences
- 2.6 – Improved student flexibility & campus consolidation

RELATED AEP ACTIONS

- 2.3 – Aboriginal Content in Undergraduate Programs (ACUP) initiative
- 2.5 – Student experience
- 2.7 – Minimising text book strategy
- 3.3 – Work Integrated Learning opportunities
- 3.4 – Enhanced professional endorsement of our programs

- 3.6 – Relationships with professional and clinical placement providers
- 5.1 – Teaching and research facilities that align with contemporary future workplace environments
- 5.2 – Co-locate teaching and research spaces
- 5.5 – High-performance computing facilities
- 5.6 – Virtual learning environments to provide an outstanding student experience

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

The Provost & Chief Academic Officer will sponsor the AAP and will maintain oversight. The Director: TIU and a nominated Dean of Programs will lead the project and report on progress to the AEP Oversight Committee Group. Project management support will be provided by the Project Officers in the TIU and the Office of the Provost & Chief Academic Officer.

A Steering Group will be established with overall responsibility for managing the Project activities across each of the four streams. This will include activity schedule, communications and consultation, and preparing the key project deliverables.

Project Steering Group
- Associate Professor Sheridan Gentili (Co-Chair)
- Professor Abelardo Pardo (Co-Chair)
- Executive Dean representative
- Dean of Programs representative
- Dean of Research representative
- UniSA Online representative
- SAS representative
- SEU representative
- Program Directors/Facilitators representative
- Academic Developer representative
- Academic Developer: Academic Integrity
- Communication and Marketing representative
- USASA representative
- Project manager

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The key stakeholders to be consulted as part of the project are:
- Executive Deans
- Deans of Programs
- Academic Director: UniSA Online
- Academic staff – Program Director/Facilitator, Course Coordinators/Online Course Facilitators
- Student & Academic Services
- Student Engagement Unit
- USASA
- Information Strategy & Technology Services
- Business Intelligence & Planning
- Program advisory groups (AEP Action 3.4)
- Accreditation bodies (where applicable), placement providers (including employers), professional associations
- UniSA Alumni

Appendix 1

ATN Joint Statement on Authentic Assessment (Jan 2020)

1. **Authentic assessment is core to enabling students to become the work-ready graduates Australia needs.** It focuses on realistic practices, scenarios and contexts and develops students' graduate capabilities and evaluative judgement, preparing them to face the challenges of the future world of work.

2. **Authentic assessment needs to be designed and implemented across the whole of degree programs and aligned with authentic learning experiences.** The pattern of assessments across a degree should include a wide variety of authentic tasks across learning units, to enable students to develop and apply a breadth of desired graduate capabilities. Careful attention should be paid to the number and levels of complexity of tasks, their timing and the balance between group and individual work. Opportunities for program teams to collaborate on program-level assessment design should be fostered and resourced.

3. **Authentic assessment challenges university students intellectually and creatively whilst building understanding of contemporary professional practices.** It also develops the higher-order thinking capabilities that characterise university education, such as critical and analytical thinking and the capacity to synthesise and communicate complex ideas for different audiences.

4. **Students need support to transition into authentic assessment as they often come to university with experience of traditional assessment types.** Authentic assessment should be designed so that students see their assessment tasks as plausible, meaningful and relevant. Students can be engaged as partners in the design and development of authentic assessment tasks.

5. **An important component of the experience of authentic assessment is that students receive feedback that is actionable.** Students need to experience a rich variety of supported opportunities to give, receive and act on feedback to promote their learning, confidence and capacity for evaluative judgement.

6. **Academic integrity is supported by focusing on learning, enabling students to see the purpose of assessment, aligning assessment with learning goals and providing support for the development of students' academic and language capabilities.** These features should be designed into authentic assessment across programs.

7. **Developing authentic assessments and academic integrity practices are scholarly activities.** They should be informed by evidence and data on their implementation collected, analysed and communicated to inform improvements in future practice.

8. **Developing a culture of authentic assessment and academic integrity requires a collective and systemic approach.** Relying on individual academic innovators isn't enough. In order to develop a culture of authentic assessment and academic integrity, institutions need to create alignment between enabling leadership, policies, systems, resourcing, practices, professional development, recognition and rewards. They need to engage students and staff as partners in this culture. Opportunities for sharing ideas, developing good practices and mentoring should be actively encouraged and resourced. Policies and systems that hold traditional practices in place or discourage innovative approaches should be critically reviewed and revised.