

Dr Lim Sok Mui May Transcript – Singapore – 8^h September 2021

Oral interactive assessment involving persons with disability

Purpose and context of the presentation

The presentation provides information on the adaptation of applied learning and authentic assessment in occupational therapy during online education as a result of COVID-19. This took the form of oral interactive assessments, which involves a **genuine and unscripted interaction** between students and other students, or students and examiner. Rather than an exam-style question-answer task, it is an authentic exchange that draws upon the students' understanding and creates a setting where they can demonstrate and apply course concepts. It provides the opportunity for students to develop their professional skills and enhance their employability prospects by developing their professional identity, that is, thinking that they have to speak like a professional, act like a professional and behave like a professional.

Assessment details

- The more relevant the assessment is to the real world, the more likely the students will want to succeed and not want to cheat or engage in academic misconduct.
- This assessment is in addition to individual and group knowledge assessment throughout the unit following engagement with course content.
- Feedback was received from clinical settings about students' preparedness and ability to articulate their reasoning to real parents and caregivers with real concerns. The students may have scored highly on exams but could not find words to explain a real child's behaviour and therapies. Written exams were not sufficient to develop these authentic clinical communication skills.
- In this new assessment students met with a 'patient' online, and the meeting was recorded. Students had to introduce themselves professionally to the 'parent' played by an actor. The parent gave information about their child and asked questions. The student had to answer the questions over ten minutes. The parent also asked for specific suggestions or clarification. Because the actor was the one interacting with the student, the lecturer could observe the sessions unseen and do real-time marking.
- Marks were given for the relevance of the response, the ability to respond with a clear perspective, whether the answers were supported by theoretical concepts, research or issues covered in the course, the quality of the suggestions and the students' ability to communicate confidently and appropriately to the client.
- Students were prepared for this assessment by being encouraged to speak during discussions at all times as if they were speaking to clients, and lecturers frequently role-played different scenarios as models.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity was explicitly scaffolded. Multiple scenarios were developed so that students could not give each other advice on the scenario they would encounter. Discussions

took place on what integrity means and the importance of not putting friends in a difficult position by asking to copy their responses, but to be a good friend and, importantly, practise professional integrity as a preparation for their careers. Quality rather than length of responses were prioritised and the recordings allowed for moderation. Students were informed that if plagiarism was suspected, they would have to repeat their assessment in a longer, live format with examiners. This was also an option for those with technical issues.

Inclusion and training of persons with disability

People with disabilities struggled to find employment, particularly during COVID-19, so the decision was made to employ them as actors for this assessment task. They were given clear information about their role and requirements of the students, and they rehearsed their roles with the lecturers beforehand.

Outcomes

Students felt that this type of assessment enabled them to gain professional skills and that the assessment held real-world relevance. Students who had practised the most felt the most confident in their communication abilities, and they noted that it wasn't as easy as they had anticipated, partly due to performance anxiety. Most students felt more anxious about this assessment than other kinds of assessment, which implies more practice is needed, particularly given how different it is to their usual forms of assessment such as exams, written tasks and memorised PowerPoint presentations.

Students reported practising with parents and friends, by learning milestones and content and then attempting to explain it in simple terms, drawing mind maps, working with peers to create spread sheet to visualise content, and translating intuitive knowledge into verbal explanations. Preparation for the assessment was a strong opportunity for peer learning and support. Results were varied, and students were debriefed about their grades afterwards.

Student debriefing

Students were shown the range of acceptable answers to the different questions and A-grade answers were used as models, which allowed students to understand why they did or did not receive high scores by comparing their responses to the models. Lecturers also coached individuals who were disappointed with their grades, by rewatching their video recordings, asking what they imagined an A-grade or C-grade would look and sound like, and discussing what they did well and what they did not do well. They also explicitly asked students about which element they thought may have contributed to their poor grade: anxiety, content knowledge or lack of practice, to get students thinking about what they could improve.

Conclusions

As long as sufficient preparation is given to students to prepare for this type of assessment, it has many benefits. It also saves lecturers time in the marking process. It also has benefits in supporting people with disabilities in paid work that is meaningful to the community.