FleSCA – Flexible Student Centred Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Given that students exhibit different learning styles, it was expected that they would favour different types of assessment. This poster describes a pilot project which offered students choices within the assessment package for a first year undergraduate module. The project is described and evaluated, and suggestions for future work are discussed

Keywords
Flexible learning, Assessment, Learning styles.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has long been accepted that individuals exhibit different styles of learning which may make particular modes of presentation of teaching material difficult for some students to assimilate[1]. It is likely, therefore, that certain styles of assessment are better suited to some students than others. Research has suggested that a rigid assessment process may disadvantage certain students [2]. In a taught module, it is common to offer a couple of different assessment packages, typically coursework and examination. It is less common for students to be given a 'choice' of assessment styles.

2. THE FleSCA PROJECT

The FleSCA project was intended to offer students a table d'hote style choice of assessment modes and was piloted on a first year undergraduate module in Problem Solving.

This module originally had three pieces of coursework and an exam. It was hoped to include the exam in the FleSCA project, but regulatory constraints made this impractical in the first cohort; it may be possible in subsequent years. The three pieces of coursework were spaced throughout the year and covered three discrete topics.

The first coursework had been a report on creative problem solving techniques. This was offered as a choice between a report and a poster in the FleSCA project. The second coursework had been a one hour closed book Maths test. The alternative to this was a series of four shorter tests with feedback in between. The last assignment had involved students in demonstrating a built web site in previous years, the alternative introduced was a report style hand in.

The take up of the alternatives was interesting. 6 students (out of 120) chose to make a poster in the first assignment. No students opted for the four short tests in the second assignment, and over half the students opted out of the web site for the final hand-in.

It seems possible that students choose what they perceive to be the 'easiest' option, and that this. may be connected to their learning styles. Work is currently being done to ascertain if this is the case.

There were some concerns about the moderation of the marks. The poster and the web site both introduced an element of assessment of 'design', hence, there was a concern that the marks given may be more subjective As there were so few posters, it was difficult to moderate across the hand in styles. With the web site, it was easier, as the mean marks could be compared. Students were very positive about the experience, and it is proposed to offer a similar scheme for the next cohort.

3. REFERENCES

[1] Riding, R. and Rayner, S. 'Cognitive Styles and Learning Strategies.' David Fulton Publishers, 2001

[2] Ratcliffe, M. B., Woodbury, J. and Thomas, L. A. – A Pedagogically Driven, Distance Learning Environment. 2nd Annual LTSN-ICS Conference, University of London, 2001