Anatomy of Assessment

Pre-Class Case Study Quizzes

Faculty: Business School

Department: EPP

Module name: Energy Business

Degree: MSc Management - Management, International, MBA (guest)

Level: Postgraduate

Approximate number of students: 70

Weighting and credit: 2 Quizzes x 15% each

Module type: Elective

Module ECTS: 5

Insights colour key

Educational Developer

Inclusivity

Learning Designer

Registry

Careers

Assessment overview

Case study quiz questions are submitted two days before the class in which the discussion of the case study takes place. In the first instance, this occurs before the course begins. There are five questions in each quiz, each worth 2-4% of the module marks, and each are intended to be answered in approximately four concise sentences. For each quiz, students have a choice of two case studies from which to choose to respond to. These quizzes occur twice in the module; there are 4 cases, with sets of questions weighted as described. A choice of which two sets of questions are answered for each pair of days.

Design decisions

Rationale for the quizzes

The module has 4 teaching days in 2 pairs in a week, then a 7-day gap. The course is not entirely case based. The lecturer originally set quizzes (to obtain a mix of assessment types and to test the transferrable skills described below) on readings that were related to the module. When a quiz was set on a case due to be discussed, student preparation and the quality of the classroom discussion improved. Since that point, all quizzes have been based on cases due to be discussed in class.
Students can choose which of two cases they respond to the quiz on – one will be discussed on each day of the pair. The recommended length of answers is one sentence per percentage point of assessment weight, giving 15 sentences per quiz. The second case study/quiz is due 7 days later from this first; this enables students to take in feedback that is provided to them.
The goal of the exercise is to train students to extract, and summarise information, as well as to provide extra incentives for class engagement, as all students will have prepared one of the two cases discussed.

Rationale for electronic delivery

As the number of assessments increased, so did the marking and feedback requirements. As a result of the electronic upload, student responses are downloaded by the lecturer in one excel spreadsheet, which facilitates quicker marking and delivery of feedback (entered into excel and email-merged via word).

Questions design

Some of the questions (5 per quiz) are simple and factual; some require a bit more analysis using facts from the case. The questions are best demonstrated by the following examples, taken from a case regarding retail energy markets in Great Britain, in this instance. (% following the question shows % of module the question is worth; the 5 questions total to 15%).

1. Why did Centrica have higher revenues from selling gas than electricity? (2%)
2. Why has the way in which companies try to get new customers changed over time? (2%).
3. Which type of customers were least likely to buy from the incumbent supplier? (3%).

Interviewee: Richard Green
Role: Professor of Sustainable Energy Business, and Module Lecturer

4. Why did customers pay different prices depending on how they paid for energy? (4%).
5. Why did gas and electricity bills rise in the decade after 2000? (4%)

Response design

One of the useful things about this assessment is the flexibility to offer very personalised feedback. A few comments are written in general to the cohort, then personal comments based on the mark of the student, and are built into the response to the student, thereby providing personal feedback to the student. These comments are sent out via Mail Merge, therefore anything in excel, student achievement-wise, can become personalised feedback, as is suitable to the particular case study.

Fit with other assessments and the programme/ module

The current breakdown of the course assessments is as follows: two individual quizzes (15% each), individual report of a speaker worth 20% (assessing what they would have left out, what could have been enhanced, etc.) and a 5,000 word group report on the group's choice among given questions, or pre-agreed topic worth 50%

The group work is using a range of techniques to analyse business decisions. It is important to understand how decisions are made in these areas, and this is a transferable skill, as is being able to describe something that happened with the speaker, plus the analysis of what was said, and extracting information. These are the programme ILOs of being able to assess information well and the importance.

Practicalities

Preparing students for assessment

As the first quiz is due before the first classroom session, the assessment is very clearly laid out in the syllabus. Additionally, students are encouraged to email the lecturer with any technical difficulties regarding insendi submission, or qualitative understanding issues of the assessment. In class, students are given the chance to ask questions.

The requirement of short and concise answers is reiterated so there should be no ambiguity as to what is the desired work product of each student. Given there are two quizzes, the prompt feedback from the first quiz (within one week's time) is returned in time so that students might implement it in the second quiz, which is a further way to facilitate students' understanding of the criteria.

Marking arrangements

The compilation of the student answers is downloaded by the lecturer with a couple of "clicks". The student answers in this case will clearly be unique to each individual and quite variable given the flexibility to some degree in the range of 'right' answers.

Quizzes must be manually marked, and by an individual with a good amount of knowledge on the subject, such as the lecturer. Correctness, but also clarity of information, is what matters; even if the weight of said question is 2%.

Feedback arrangements

Once the marking is completed, students receive marks and feedback in their email inbox, which makes delivering the feedback flexible and fast. For the individual feedback, it tends to be, whether it is a good answer, a point they missed, or a point the lecturer particularly likes.

Online adaptations

As the numbers of students rose electronic feedback proved to be a great solution to reduce the pressure on the lecturer. When the module was run in hybrid mode, not very many attended online; combining face to face and online students, there was perhaps 60-70% attendance.

Advantages of the assessment type

- Personalised feedback that should help them develop from one quiz to the next;
- Maximises participation in class as it is a natural preparatory exercise for in-class discussions;
- Reducing the amount of information that must go into slides during lecture – less should need to be explained if it was in the case;
- This is not the case method where you infer everything, because there is a lot of proper economics in the module;
- Students are able to rely on the case and develop and understanding of it;
- This method is unique to other courses;
- When students have chosen the other case's quiz questions they are still asked to prepare the case and look at the questions – people are still

Pre-Class Case Study Quizzes

engaged;
- Weighting – 15% of the marking for 15 sentences – the lecturer does not think this is trivial – perhaps overweighted for the effort required;
- 70% distinction / 60% merit / 50% pass as per standard UK guidelines;
- As the lecturer provides the delivery back; the weighting of the largest assessment went up to 50%; under current business school assessments, this renders the remaining assessments under 25% without a need for a second marker;
- Any element of choice included in assessment (and its related teaching where possible) is a solid pedagogic decision, which allows students greater responsibility to self-regulate their learning, and potentially increases capacity for self-efficacy;
- The quiz questions have been designed well, and are appropriate to the level and gravity of this assessment within the context of the module;
- The case-study setup allows for positioning the content of the module within the 'bigger picture', real-world situations;
- Introducing an online component that needs to be completed before the session and then forms the basis for class discussions aligns well with flipped classroom principles. Attaching a small amount of credit to pre-class work incentivises students to prepare.
- Having unlimited time to draft short succinct answers to questions allows students who might have specific learning needs sufficient time to draft and redraft their answers.
- Being concise is a very important skill for Business students to develop. In the workplace they will often have to deal with big case studies that they need to summarize in 4 sentences being able to identify the main issue, summarize and extract complex information.

Limitations of the assessment type

- Students noted they found it hard to meet the criteria of distinction. With more discursive questions, it can be harder for students to understand how to achieve desired marks, although the lecturer laid out in the assessment brief, and delivered verbally, the key criteria would be extracting the relevant information in concise, clear sentences (approximately 4 per case);
- People tend to be slightly more involved in the first case;
- As it is knowledge-based, it is a very time consuming, especially if one individual is marking each student in the class. As discussed, there is an additional work component to make a rubric if the assessment is marked by someone not as familiar with the material. There is a time pressure component, if the quizzes are relatively close together, so that the feedback will reach the students in time for them to implement it in the second quiz;

Advice for implementation

- When introducing low stakes assessments with a formative function it is important to consider whether the attached credit doesn't take away from the formative focus, i.e. the focus on learning. It is important to consider the overall assessment burden for the staff as well for the students, i.e. can it be marked within the allocated timeframe, can appropriate feedback be provided so that support can be put in place? All of these considerations should be given when designing assessments of this kind;
- Be very clear about expectations for the answers (clear, concise), and give students ample opportunity to ask questions about the feedback following initial quiz. Early questions, before the course starts, people can email in;
- Provide precise information about deadlines, and provide as personalised feedback as possible;
- Mail Merge for feedback is a recommendation;
- Next year, the assessment might be cut to four questions worth 3% (x1) and 4% (x3) each to save on marking time with an expected increase in student numbers;
- As this is a 'small' assessment in comparison, one thing to consider is whether to allow further element of choice and allow students to select a case study of their own and respond to same/similar prompts (this might impact marking time and effort though);
- To make the assessment accessible to students with specific learning needs ensure that the format in which the questions are presented is accessible to digital technology, screen readers and has dictation facilities embedded into the questions.