

5D Portfolios and peer reviews: the challenges of challenging conventional assessment

Presenters: Lisa Irene Hau, and Ian Ruffell, School of Humanities

This paper discusses the challenges involved in redesigning the assessment of a Classical Civilisation Level 2 course in order to make it more focused on developing skills and encouraging reflection than on essay writing alone.

We begin by explaining our decision to move to a combination of essay writing, peer reviewing, and portfolio compilation. We go on to discuss the evolution of this assessment over the past decade in response to the challenges that we have encountered, and the strategies we have adopted (human, pedagogic, technical) to overcome those. We set out the rationale for our current assessment both in terms of preparations for Honours entry and in terms of developing graduate attributes, and reflect on the continuing challenges posed by this type of assessment to conveners, tutors, and markers. In particular, we consider the problem of how to elicit useful student feedback and how to judge if the changes made are having a positive effect, as well as the impact of isolated changes to assessment practice within much broader student curricula.

Building on discussion with practitioners in Classics at a portfolio workshop held at Glasgow in May 2013, the paper ends with some ideas for future development of assessment on this and other courses and opens up discussion of the merits and problems of portfolios and peer reviews as parts of undergraduate assessment.