**Embracing the hybrid: Reimagining management assessment**

In this roundtable, we present the background to re-imagining a course assessment with the aim of using a hybrid approach that is innovative and interesting to students and the teaching team. We use a continual learning methodology to underpin improvements whilst considering pedagogical and institutional parameters. The hybrid model of assessment gives equity and fairness in students mode choices whilst offering innovative assessment counterposed by challenges and boundaries. Here we offer a background to our experiences, invite others to engage, share and reflect to develop new ways that maximise technology but also create pathways to take into the future.

**Keywords:** hybrid, assessment, continual improvement

**Introduction**

In this roundtable, the aim is to tackle the issues of embracing the drive for online especially due to the impetus of Covid19 and the transition challenges this has triggered. In addition, we add the complexities of program (BBus) and course redevelopment where creativity, interesting and innovation approaches are needed particularly in assessment where a hybrid approach is needed. After giving the background and context to our focus of teaching Business Ethics, we underpin our redevelopment with a continual learning methodology to ensure the fundamental needs of meeting learning outcomes, workload models and other parameters are considered. The notion of this round table discussion is to use the continual learning framework to look at how and why hybrid assessments can be fashioned and applied. We invite others to engage, share and reflect to develop new ways that maximise technology but also create pathways to take into the future.

**Background and context**

In 2019, I (first author) assumed the management discipline leader role for the Bachelor of Business (BBus) at a large public university in south-east Queensland, Australia. Among other accolades for the university, the management discipline has been placed in the top 300 in the Shanghai Ranking Global Ranking of Academic Subjects for 2020. Prior to Covid19, the business school took on the task of upgrading the BBus which was tagged as the Super BBus. As part of the upgrading, all 17 disciplines in the BBus were tasked to review their structure, offerings and rationalise the courses within each major. As the largest discipline in the BBus program, management is taught over three of the five campuses plus we support two external programs however there had not been a revamp for over a decade. To tackle this task, we drew in management learning and teaching staff that were available (15) for a day of deconstructing and reconstructing. Although there were the occasional tense moments, this day proved to be a gem as all involved enthusiastically participated. This day was co-ordinated by two professional staff which was a deliberate decision as they brought limited bias and were able to facilitate and summarise the findings.

In the next stages, there has been the re-imagining, development and redevelopment of several courses. The course that we lead on (both authors), Business Ethics has been the first to be redeveloped and is the focus here. This third year course is offered in all offerings of management (two campuses: online and two external offerings), with 500 students enrolment. In 2019, we received funding to build in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is a fundamental of the Super BBus and the University as signatory of PRME. In 2020 and the impact of Covid19, the management discipline was well placed to make the rapid shift to online as we already had two fully online versions of all courses, the University online course and open university online course. With Business Ethics, one of the open university online offerings was the redevelopment pilot so this was used across all university offerings, thus an easy transition. However, minor changes were required to meet the needs of the university students, who are generally different from matured and mainly professional open university students. In late 2020 and early 2021 we have faced a few challenges in creating hybrid assessment: first, we wanted to create a summative assessment that is innovative, meets the learning outcomes, fits in the university marking models and methods but is also a hybrid approach which presents challenges accommodating all requirements (Ghemawat, 2017) in giving choices to students (Radford, Stewart & Sarvaiya, 2020). Second, we also wanted to focus on building employability skills that incorporate business ethics, the SDGs and met the learning outcomes of the course and program. Third, we wanted to develop a hybrid assessment which works well for both regular university students as well as experienced professional students in open university course.

**Theoretical Foundation and Teaching Implications**

Higher education is in a constant state of flux (Coates & Mahat, 2014) which reached new heights in 2020 with the global drive to embrace online learning and teaching due to Covid19 impacts and creating a “new normal” (Lund Dean & Foray, 2020). Up to 2020, the business case of seeking new models was fostered primarily by economic factors however the push experienced in 2020 was one driven by a health crisis. Arbaugh (2014) presents and discusses the optimal ways and modes of course design with hybrid synonymous with several terms including blended, virtual and online. In a special issue of the British Journal of Education Technology, a hybrid learning space was characterised as a “blurring of boundaries” with hybrid “the integration of in-class interaction, [and] an online space” (Bennerr, Knight and Rowley, 2020 p.1189). For this roundtable discussion, we see hybrid as online, in class (or face to face) or virtual but needing to be a combination of two or more of these where assessment can go across the platforms.

Taking a continual improvement approach to teaching gives the capacity to scope a systems thinking philosophy to build, develop, adapt and learn (Houghton & Stewart, 2017). As a management lecturer who researches in organisational development the normative re-educative framing is an appropriate method to practise what I preach and embed improvements. In this development of a hybrid assessment the plan (idea), do (pilot/test), study (reflect/review), act (adapt/amend) model (Deming, 1994) has underpinned the process (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Adapted from Deming (1994)

In sum, Figure 1 provides a brief of the situation to date where we aimed at building employability skills that incorporated business ethics, the SDGs and met the learning outcomes of the course and program. To do this we adapted the idea of grant submission and developed a sustainable management philosophy which students could either write or do a recorded presentation. The grant part of the idea came from our own experiences in working with the government and the sustainable management philosophy was adapted from building a teaching philosophy (Beatty, Leigh & Lund Dean, 2009; 2020). In this assessment, students selected either a real or illusory company and on ethics and sustainable theories to underpin a philosophy, that linked to one or two SDGs. The aim was that students would develop a notion of their ‘self’ as an ethical manager and apply this practically in the assessment. This was a group assessment where a marked draft was given 15% (5% was peer feedback) and the final submission was 35% (5% for peer feedback). In cycle 1, there were two online offerings where students were offered group consults. At this point, the assessment received above average feedback however the group consults (1 hour) were not justifiable when offerings have 15-30 groups with 4-6 students therefore considerably more time was needed by the teaching team than what was allocated in the workload. In cycle 2, all seven offerings over three teaching periods including two on-campus were online due to Covid19. In each teaching period, the assessment was fine-tuned based on student feedback and consults with the teaching team. For example, in the final offering of university for 2020, the flexible sustainable development philosophy idea was adapted towards more structured business ethics report to support the routine university students, therefore missing the point of creating an innovative assessment. This takes us to cycle 3 where we are now and seeking a summative assessment that can be offered across offerings to diverse students’ needs. We need a true hybrid assessment that conforms to institutional workload models so that it is not a bespoke assessment in addition to being interesting, innovative and feeding into the overall learning outcomes.

**Session Description**

By the time we do the roundtable session at MOBTS in June 2021, we will be teaching this course and it will be well into the ‘doing’ and ‘studying’ of the hybrid assessment ideas that we will be using for 2021. This roundtable will be aimed at sharing our experience but most importantly engage others as to how might they (or have they) approached hybrid modes to incorporate traditional notions e.g., workload and learning outcomes, whilst maximising technology, to find effective pedagogical ways forward particularly in the assessment.

Firstly, we will open the roundtable with a brief introduction to each other and the process. Secondly, we will guide a collaborative process with participants to share but also look at how they might take away key points in tackling hybrid assessments using a continual learning experience (Deming, 1994; Stewart & Gapp, 2018). The discussion will be interactive and start with 10 minutes for an overview of the methodology (continual improvement – i.e., Deming, 1994; Dick, 2017). Subsequent to the foundational discussion (10 minutes), Table 1 shows the three phases (10 minutes each) that focus on how and why hybrid assessment is important then will be synthesized in a concluding debrief of 20 minutes. For the outcome of this roundtable, we channel Aristotle to embrace continual learning: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence therefore is not an act, but a habit” to extend and scope the possibilities of how one might be able to achieve effective hybrid assessment through continual learning and collaboration.

Table 1: Round table phases based continual (Deming, 1994; Dick, 2017; Stewart & Gapp, 2018).

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|  | ***Plan*** | ***Do*** | ***Study*** | ***Act*** |
| Phase 1 | Set ground rules  Depending on numbers; use break out rooms  **Why** hybrid | Consider the possibilities of hybrid approaches e.g. the medium; the limitations; the advantages | Debrief and report:  What are the big issues/advantages | Reflect |
| Phase 2 | Either in break out rooms or in one group consider **how** might a hybrid assessment look? | How might you (or have you) use hybrid assessments? | Debrief and report: What worked/did not work; ideas for improvement | Reflect |
| Phase 3 | Either in break out rooms or in one group what are the three-key take away points for you | How and why can you start thinking about hybrid assessment for the future | Check in - future | Reflect |

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