

ENABLING LARGE GROUP ASSESSMENT

Dear Colleagues,

Those attending the New Directions Programme (NDP) would be familiar with the COPs (Community of Practice). For those who have not, the COPs are meetings where faculty participants, in different groups, discuss a pre decided relevant topic or article, during the course of the NDP and even after, and continue a practice of sharing and learning from each other for continuing professional development.

We thought it would be useful to share the summaries of the discussions which have examples of actions that can or are being done by our colleagues. This is the first of the series.

During the month of May and June, the various COPs discussed the topic of that **“Enabling Large Group Assessment”**.

One of the fundamental aims is to continuously help faculty in access to new teaching and learning methodologies. Given below is the summary of the best practices adopted by faculty in this area-

1. **PRE-PLANNING**

Faculty teaching large classes emphasized that pre planning is a must for large classes. Teachers should prepare a systematic blow up of the lecture. All faculty members should follow the same blow up. Even before each lecture, the faculty must spend sufficient time in preparation before going to class. Pre-planning the lecture and preparing well, are the valuable tools in large class teaching.

2. **ASSESSMENT IN LARGE CLASS**

Faculty shared following best practices adopted by them for large class assessment

a. General Guidelines and policy for teachers

In the Academic Unit, general guidelines and policy on assessment including grading structure and standardized grading criteria/rubric for each assessment are provided to all teachers involved in marking assignments. Meetings for marking held before the commencement of each semester. Thus, teachers have opportunities to discuss and agree upon different issues in order to set up a fair and consistent marking guideline for a course.

b. Assessment calendar for large classes

- Clear Formation of assessment calendar for one particular class either centrally or by all coordinators of one particular class. A meeting among different coordinators of a particular large class held to fix dates for quizzes, lab evaluations so that assessments of various subjects do not overlap during evaluation period.
- Well defined assessment dates among the subject in- charges teaching the same class before the start of semester.

- Predefined slots in Academic calendar for conducting quizzes. Such slots should be in the midway of MST and EST, so that the maximum benefit of continuous assessment is achieved.

c. Faculty engagement in other activities

Faculty should display his/her engagement in other activities, if any, during reading week or regular semester. Students queries can be solved individually only. This will help students of large classes to get their queries resolved by knowing the availability of the faculty.

d. Question bank formation

A question bank formed for lab viva and practical by all the teachers of a large class teaching different groups of the same class. The question bank should contain questions of all difficulty levels. For final evaluation the questions should be from this bank.

e. Meeting of faculty of one batch

Once (or more) in a semester, faculty (from different departments also) teaching the same class should sit together and discuss the problems faced by the students so as to bring out solutions and reflections in a better way.

f. Continuous assessment

In large classes there should be more frequent online quizzes/assessments for regular evaluation of student's learning. It is often effective to assess students regularly in the course on their knowledge of the subject, their assessment concept, and their learning expectations, in order to find out any potential problems that may adversely affect student learning. Students receive these feedbacks so they can identify their weakness earlier and have more time to rectify their mistakes. This would also provide feedback to teachers to adopt more optimized teaching methods or to offer extra support targeted specifically to these students. This will help the teacher to assess the delivery of the course also.

g. Self and Peer assessment

The effectiveness of assessment for large classroom can be enhanced through the self and peer reflection. Teachers should involve students themselves in assessment. When teachers share with their students the process of assessment - giving up control, sharing power and leading students to take on the authority to assess themselves - the professional judgment of both is enhanced. Assessment becomes not something done to students. It becomes an activity done with students. Students' ability to self-assess can provide valuable clues to the teacher about how deeply they have understood the tasks and this information can improve teaching and learning. Peer-assessment includes processes which require students to "provide either feedback or grades (or both) to their peers on a performance, based on the criteria defined for that performance.

These are good ways to reduce teachers' workload and help students' to develop self-reflection, critique, judgment and be more responsible for their own learning

h. General guidelines on assessment and grading criteria for all assessment for students

General guidelines on assessment including grading structure should be provided and properly explained early in the course. This helps students to understand and be familiarized with the marking criteria and may effectively avoid submission of poor quality work.

This can effectively reduce the time for marking because students are clearer about what is expected from their assignments and also enhance the quality of their learning. A quick way for general feedback is to have a standardized grading criteria/rubric for each assessment, so students will know how they are graded. Students can use these rubrics as a guide throughout the semester, and TAs can use this rubric to grade students' overall performance in the semester. This will help in improving transparency in evaluating large class.

i. Random checking of evaluation done by peers

In large class assessment, coordinator should randomly check the assessment done by other faculty (TAs) in MST, EST, Labs and tutorials to maintain uniformity. This will ensure that there is no bias or disadvantage in an assessment towards any particular group of students.

j. Technological Assessment Tools

Teachers can also make use of online assessment tools, such as computer-based exams or tests (electronic assessment tools). One such tool suggested faculty was **HakerRank** (www.hackerrank.com). These online exams and tests systems require little amount of marking time. Students can also check their results online and access the model answers by themselves.

3. FLIPPED CLASSROOM

For large classes flipped class room technique can be used effectively. One can pre-record the lectures and upload them on googlesite (or any other platform) before the lecture. Students should be asked to review the lecture before coming to the class. Teacher can do more activity based teaching in such flipped class room.

Conclusion

Assessing large class has posed significant limitation on curriculum design. Due to time and resources constraints, teachers often use less time-demanding assessment methods which however, may not always optimize student learning. These constraints are often weighed up with the reliability, validity and learning outcomes of the assessment methods. It is important to remember that there is no single effective way to assess large classes. Teachers have to consider the context of their teaching style, background of students and the intended learning outcomes of the course.