

# EAT ERASMUS Case Study Template

**Case Study title: Introducing a novel Portfolio Assessment in Linguistics**



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## **Abstract (c.200 words)**

### ***What was your focus? What were your aims?***

The aim of this assessment was to address the key academic skills that were part of the learning outcomes of the module, and to encourage students to think critically about the role communication plays in and impacts on close relationships.

Previously, the module had been assessed by two assessment points. The first assessment was an essay, which covered content from the first half of the module, and the second assessment was an exam, covering content from the second half. The aim of this change was to introduce a portfolio assessment approach, where students had to develop an output for each third of the module. The students were given the choice of what that output would look like, guided by the module leader, but with the option to go outside of these suggested activities after consultation with the module leader.

### ***What was the context? (discipline/sample etc.) How did you investigate your focus?***

This assessment was for a final year module, “Communicating in Relationships”, within the Language and Linguistics department of the School of English, Communications and Philosophy. This module examines the theories and interdisciplinary research on relational aspects of interpersonal communication. The students were final year students, with a class size of approximately 60. The module was delivered over the second semester of the final year, so it was one of the last modules the students would take. The module was a flipped-classroom teaching approach, where the core content was delivered through videos and asynchronous learning materials, and then the lecture and seminar sessions (3 hours per week) reinforced, consolidated and extended the content, and encouraged the students to reflect critically on examples of interactions within relationships (for example, clips from television programmes).

### ***What were your findings about what you did and what you learnt?***

The findings suggest that students engaged really well with this kind of continuous, portfolio based assessment, and it increased their engagement with the module. It seemed to enhance their assessment literacy, and the quality of the work they produced seems to be superior, compared to previous iterations of the module, in terms of the academic skills they demonstrated.

This intervention showed that it was possible to introduce and embed a novel assessment type, which gave the students more agency and independence. The assessment also showed the high degree to which students can demonstrate considerable innovation and creativity, if they are provided with the opportunity and support to do so.

### ***What implications are there for assessment and feedback practice and research in higher education?***

The key implications from this approach suggest:

- That it is possible to change long-established assessment methodologies successfully;

- That providing choice and variety of assessment types has positive impacts on inclusivity for an increasingly diverse student body;
- That if you give students the opportunity to show their creativity, they respond well to this challenge;
- That students engage well with a portfolio type approach, where they contribute progressively towards the final outcome;
- That students engage well with self- assessment and peer- assessment, if it is embedded within the assessment, is appropriately supported, and has a clear positive outcome for them;
- Finally, for the educator, this kind of varied assessment is much more engaging and enjoyable to mark, rather than a series of very similar submissions of an identical type.

## Reporting on your case study

The aim of ERASMUS EAT is to look at how an integrated assessment framework (EAT) can support enhancements in assessment and feedback by trying to develop staff and student self-regulatory practices. Your case study will benefit from being very clearly focused from the outset and in considering how all the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the EAT Framework need to be attended to in order to address your core issue. Keeping it as simple as possible is a good thing. Engaging with student as much as possible and thinking clearly about the evidence that you would like to collect will help in the design and implementation of your idea.

<b>Designing an Assessment Intervention: What is your assessment focus?</b>		
<b>Prompts</b>	<b>Key questions</b>	<b>Please add some thoughts/experiences/reflections in this column</b>
<b>Focus</b>	<b>What is the key assessment issue you considered?</b>	<p>The key challenge with this assessment was that the previous assessment approach (50% Essay/50% Exam) was not particularly engaging for students, and raised concerns and issues regarding inclusivity and diversity. Students just seemed to be going through the motions of ‘getting the assessment done’ rather than using the content of the module and assessment as an opportunity to develop skills and transform their knowledge into something authentic and meaningful for them.</p> <p>There was also the problem that students tended to disengage with the module after the submission of the essay because they could be more strategic in working towards the end of module exam.</p>
<b>Why did you choose this focus?</b>	<b>Why did you focus on this? On the basis of what evidence? Why did it need looking at?</b>	<p><b>There was a series of key challenges that needed to be overcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusivity within the assessment type was problematic, as both assessment points were traditional written assessments.</li> <li>• The type of assessment did not align with authentic assessment needs for the students as a whole.</li> <li>• Students did not find the assessments particularly engaging, and they did not necessarily align as well as they could to the intended MLOs and the module content, which had a high focus on reflective thinking.</li> </ul>

<p><b>What was the context?</b> <i>Module / programme Discipline</i>  <i>Country</i>  <i>Who was involved – staff and students</i></p>	<p><b>What is the disciplinary/module/course context in which your assessment work is situated?</b></p>	<p><b>Discipline:</b> Language and Linguistics  <b>Module:</b> Communicating in Relationships (Final year)  <b>Degree Course:</b> BA English Language and Linguistics  <b>Staff:</b> Dr Katy Jones  <b>Students:</b> Approximately 60 students on the course</p>
<p><b>Why is this important?</b>  <i>What is your contribution – is it original? Is it confirmatory of previous work? Is it actively taking the field forward by adding new understandings?</i></p>	<p><b>Why is what you did important?</b></p>	<p>This work builds on previous approaches to developing portfolio assessments within higher education. It also builds on considerations of inclusivity in assessment, and the impact of enhancing student choice and agency within assessment.  The model undertaken included considerable self-assessment and peer assessment activities to support the learning and development of the students, and so builds on the self- and peer-assessment literature.</p>
<p><b>How does this work contribute to current understandings we have of assessment and feedback</b>  <i>To what extent are you aware of current national and international assessment and feedback higher</i></p>	<p><b>How does what you focused on link to current understandings of and priorities in assessment and feedback within your institution and more widely in higher education?</b></p>	<p>This work aligns very strongly with current developments within our institution of encouraging inclusivity in assessment, diversification of assessment types away from more traditional assessments, and the embedding of authentic skills within assessment. It also aligns with institutional aims towards shifting the balance between summative and formative assessment, and reducing the overall amount of summative assessment.</p>

## Implementation: What did you do?

Prompts	Key questions	Please add some thoughts/experiences/reflections in this column
<p><b>The starting situation</b></p> <p><i>The project promotes an action research type approach – working with students and staff to implement ideas and then evaluating them.</i></p> <p><i>It encourages the use of a mixed methodology and methods – the use of quantitative methods (e.g. survey data) and qualitative approaches (e.g., discussions with colleagues) to investigate practice.</i></p>	<p><b>How did you investigate your focus? What was the rationale for choosing this aspect?</b></p> <p><b>Did you do any pre and post testing of ideas/abilities/ attitudes?</b></p>	<p><b>What was the rationale for choosing this aspect?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to bring more formative assessment into the assessment regime of the module</li> <li>• Wanting to embed more self-reflection and peer-review of work in a formative way in order to better engage students with the process of assessment rather than simply the product</li> <li>• Embedding formative feedback early on within assessment practices, supporting students in understanding the parameters of the assessment activities, and developing their assessment literacy</li> <li>• Enhancing student choice and student agency</li> <li>• Providing opportunities for students to review and revise pieces of assessment to gain feed forward for future learning.</li> <li>• Wanting to ensure that the module wasn't assessment-heavy, even though it has the potential to be content-heavy</li> </ul> <p><b>Did you do any pre and post testing of ideas/abilities/ attitudes?</b></p> <p>No, the assessment had to be planned well in advance of the start of the module, due to institutional requirements for module planning.</p> <p>Within the parameters of the portfolio, there was discussion with the students of the suggested tasks they could do. For example, they could submit essays, blogs, podcasts, magazine analyses, videos, or performance activities. While these were tasks suggested by the lecturer, students were encouraged to go beyond these ideas, provided that they discussed their ideas with the module leader, and the tasks met the MLOs and addressed core marking criteria established by the School.</p> <p><b>When choosing an area of focus, what sources of information did you use to support your decision?</b></p> <p>The EAT framework allowed for objective ideas, and served as an opportunity to reflect on the proposed approaches.</p> <p>Literature around authentic assessment, assessment design, and portfolio assessment helped inform the design.</p>

		<p><b>Did you use EAT to measure student/staff engagement in assessment pre and post?</b>  No, EAT wasn't used as a diagnostic tool but was used rather as an heuristic device for prompting reflections during the design process of the assessment. EAT was mainly used to underpin thinking and validate ideas.</p>
<p><b>What did you do?</b>  Describe what your approach involved.  What did you do to enhance a self-regulatory approach to assessment and feedback practice  What roles did students and educators play?  See Moore et al (2015) Process diagram to help you describe the elements of what you did?</p>	<p><b>What were the key things you did and with whom?</b>  <b>What student and staff groups did you engage with and how?</b>  <b>Who approved ethical consent? (Institution?)</b>  <b>Over what time scale did you conduct this project?</b>  <b>Did it involve 1 or several iterations of change initiatives?</b>  <b>What information did you collect?</b>  <b>What tools/resources did you use?</b></p>	<p><b>Communicating in Relationships</b>  The module examines the communication processes involved in the dynamics of relationships. There is a strong social science element to the module, and it allows for creativity and reflection. It was clear that the module content could be assessed more creatively than by traditional essays and exams. The intention was to promote more meaningful and authentic assessment and feedback practices and allow for collaboration and inclusivity.  Formerly the assessment was 50% essay (mid-point of module) and 50% end of module exam.  <b>New approach:</b> 100% portfolio.  <b>3 portfolio mini-assignments (30% of the module mark each):</b> 1) Based on theoretical foundations of the module, across the first third of the module; 2) Focused on the content in the second third of the module; 3) Focused on content from the last third. The aim was to build on each piece as the module progressed.  The students had to address all of the module Learning Outcomes across the three pieces of assessment, but it was up to them which ones, in what order, and how they achieved this. One restriction was that they couldn't choose the same type of task twice but rather needed three different task-types (eg a blog, an analysis, and a critical review).   <b>Weekly Tasks (10% of the module mark):</b> Weekly group tasks contributed to the portfolio piece. These were typically a self-reflection, a summary of a group discussion, or a short critique of their work. Weighting was 1% per week, and the mark was a binary yes/no, based on their engagement or not. In general, students showed very good engagement with each of the tasks and reported that they could see the value of them.   <b>Support Provided:</b>  1) <b>Three self-reflection points:</b> After each first draft of a mini-assignment, students completed a self-assessment form, where they mapped their work onto the LOs. Then they looked at the Assessment Criteria, and mapped their work against the criteria, to</p>

		<p>identify areas where they were doing well, and what to work on. Then they had to identify concrete actions to develop the areas they identified as needing work.</p> <p>2) <b>Two points of formative feedback:</b> Firstly, lecturer formative feedback was provided on a draft of the 1<sup>st</sup> portfolio piece (after the student had completed a self-assessment). The 2<sup>nd</sup> piece required a self-assessment and then students shared their outputs with each other in pre-established study groups, and gave peer feedback based on the assessment criteria, showing a justification of the mark. The 3<sup>rd</sup> piece, was self-assessed. All three pieces were then assessed summatively by the lecturer.</p> <p>3) <b>Asynchronous guidance:</b> There were short ‘how to...’ videos of the lecturer explaining the different suggested task types (eg how to write an academic blog). Exemplars of each task type were uploaded to the VLE, and there were opportunities for in-class analyses of exemplars and discussion of the MLOs and assessment criteria. A Padlet was set up to respond to student queries.</p>
<p><b>How was what you did aligned to the EAT concepts (FIDELITY) See check list below?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inclusive</b> – do all students have equal access to learning and equal chances to do well?</li> <li>• <b>Shared beliefs and values</b> – have these been discussed and agreed between staff and students? Is there agreement on the key self-regulatory skills that need to be focused on?</li> <li>• <b>Student-staff partnership</b> – how genuine is this? To what extent are students encouraged to participate in all assessment decisions?</li> <li>• <b>Sensitive to context – how have you adapted assessment to suit your context?</b> nuances of your discipline and course, situated within your faculty and institution; and nature of student intake – what is specific about your course/subject demands and types of students you have?</li> <li>• <b>Holistic</b> – the whole experience of the student</li> <li>• <b>Integrative</b> – how all aspects of assessment are interrelated and impact one another</li> <li>• <b>Agentic</b> – allows students and lecturers to take control of their learning/teaching</li> </ul>	<p><b>How did you incorporate EAT concepts into your design?</b></p> <p><b>If relevant, how did you support colleagues to understand how to apply these concepts?</b></p> <p><b>To what extent were staff able to</b></p>	<p><b>INCLUSIVITY:</b> The portfolio submissions didn’t have to be written, so people who did not align well with that medium could decide to produce their work using an alternative medium. The genre could be variable, as long as they had the academic skills underpinning it, and could be evaluated using the assessment criteria.</p> <p><b>SHARED BELIEFS AND VALUES:</b> In retrospect, while the reasons for the assessment being set up in this way were explained to the students, it was presented to them as a done deal. Shared values and beliefs could have been explored more from the beginning, i.e. shared ideas across the student group.</p> <p>That said, students appreciated this rationale implicitly, and mostly responded well. Those who engaged with the process, loved it. Those who engaged less well were less enthusiastic and reported that the workload was too heavy - they just wanted to do the essay and leave.</p> <p><b>STUDENT-STAFF PARTNERSHIP</b> – Students could negotiate a different assessment type from the suggested tasks for the mini-assignments. Also, as more assessments came in, the students began to feel the pressure of work, so the workload was negotiated together as a group.</p> <p><b>SENSITIVE TO CONTEXT</b> – This approach worked particularly well with this module. The themes are about communicating in relationships, so much of the content and learning is underpinned and/or reinforced by reflection. Students could choose to share as much</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engagement in meaningful learning experiences – relevant</b></li> <li>• <b>Sustainable</b> – means manageable for all; also enabling students to manage their own learning themselves</li> </ul> <p>– so extent to which they are able to accurately assess the quality of their own work.</p>	<p><b>engage students in co-design?</b> (see Appendix F)</p>	<p>or as little as they wanted to, in terms of personal reflection, and were encouraged to reflect privately at all times. The reflective approach aligned well the module content. The module was a flipped module, so the live sessions embedded these ideas more, and were used to consolidate and extend the asynchronous content (e.g. analysed and reflected on relational communication on TV shows or in book/songs).</p> <p><b>HOLISTIC</b> – This approach developed students as people, as well as their relational communication skills. The group work and peer-feedback activities were also helpful. Much feedback from students on the module was positive around the reflective component; it helped students develop assessment literacy, and helped scaffold their learning experiences.</p> <p><b>INTEGRATIVE</b> – Limited impact outside of the module, but more due to the structure of the programme as a whole. The students could see the relationship between the assessment parts, and how the self-assessment and peer feedback fitted together.</p> <p><b>AGENTIC</b> – Some students were reluctant to embrace the agency they were offered. Some just wanted to be told what to do. Exchange students were a bit shocked by the approach at the start, as it was unexpected/unusual for them, but seemed to adapt quickly and successfully.</p> <p><b>MEANINGFUL</b> – The assessment portfolio gave students a chance to do something new, and try something different. It was meaningful for them because they had the agency to decide what they thought was meaningful.</p> <p><b>SUSTAINABLE</b> – It was a lot of work to set up the processes initially, but now that all of the support and guidance has been developed (e.g. video guides for each assessment task type), subsequent years should be less work. From the student perspective, they need to be consistently engaged with the module to be successful, so some felt it was more work than other modules.</p>
<p>See Assessment and Feedback Principles Appendix A and Student Engagement in Assessment templates</p>	<p>To what extent were you able to implement the EAT <u>assessment and feedback principles</u>?</p>	<p><b>Barriers: Technology</b> (the VLE); group tasks were sometimes challenging, and finding one place for it all to happen was a problem – needed different platforms for different things. Barrier to being creative and simple.</p> <p><b>Pre-established parameters</b>, such as assessment criteria, pre-design of LOs on the</p>



	<p><b>What <i>barriers and facilitators</i> were there to implementation?</b></p>	<p>module description, prevented ongoing co-development. Assessment criteria aren't fit for purpose for variety of assessment. Inflexibility was a challenge.</p> <p><b>Facilitators: <i>Module content</i></b> - an engaging topic. <b><i>Students</i></b> themselves bought into the idea of being assessed in this way. <b><i>Learning technologists</i></b> helped with guidance over video materials, and helped support students who wanted to use different media. The EAT framework gave it the underpinnings. <b><i>Colleagues were supportive</i></b>. Module moderator really supportive and positive about the quality of work that the students produced and was impressed by how students were able to transform ideas into a different genre.</p>
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## Assessing the Impact of your Intervention: Key findings

Prompts	Key questions	Please add some thoughts/experiences/reflections in this column
<p><b>How successful was the approach?</b>  <i>Did it engage the students and staff you wanted it to?</i></p>	<p>To what extent did your intervention reach your intended audience of staff and students?                      Was it manageable?                      Are there plans to test it more widely?</p>	<p>Those students who 'bought into' the process and fully engaged with it, benefited from the iterative and reflective approach to assessment. Overall, attendance was good (or better than previous years at least), possibly because students knew their attendance would benefit their assessment. In general, they reported positively about the peer feedback activity. There was an element of pot luck, however, based on who their peers were in the group – some groups gelled, others not so much. Students reported that the peer feedback was 'kinder' (ie more positive but perhaps not as realistic) than the assessor feedback.</p> <p>There was an interesting observation that the podcast submissions were far more cohesive, coherent and engaging than some of the written submissions. This could be due to students not feeling the need to sound 'academic' and use complex sentences and language. The result was that they could get their meaning across more clearly.</p>
<p><b>What was the impact on students?</b>  <i>Note any reported impacts on students:</i>  <i>Did those who did engage do better than those who did not?</i>  <i>Did it narrow gaps in attainment between more and less advantaged students?</i>  <i>Student beliefs about their role in assessment</i>  <i>Student confidence</i>  <i>Student learning outcomes</i>  <i>Student engagement in assessment</i>  <i>Student satisfaction</i>  <i>Assessment Literacy</i>  <i>Ability to use, seek and give feedback</i>  <i>Contribution to assessment resources and valuable outputs</i></p>	<p>What were the impacts on students?                      Did all students benefit equally?                      What specific changes resulted if any?                      Any unexpected outcomes?</p>	<p>Hard to comment due to previous cohorts impacted by Covid. Marks probably higher, partly due to the 10% mark contribution for engagement.</p> <p>Quality of work seemed better, but difficult to say because they were different media to previously. However, they were much more enjoyable to read and assess. You could see more of the students in their work; the pieces were more personal, more engaging and generally less 'dry'. Interestingly, the weaker submissions tended to be the more traditional essays.</p> <p>There was a positive impact on the confidence of students to be self-reflective and innovative. Any kind of self-reflection seems to have a positive effect. Confidence in assessment literacy certainly improved. Through the self and peer-assessment tasks, students were able to understand the assessment criteria and how they related to their work. During exemplar analysis, students were very critical of the pieces.</p> <p>The process enhanced assessment and feedback literacies. Giving feedback and being able to unpick what peers said about their own work were powerful</p>

		processes.
<p><b>What was the impact on staff?</b></p> <p><i>Impact on staff engagement in training</i>  <i>Did it impact staff conceptions of assessment and the role of students in the process?</i>  <i>Did it make assessment more efficient?</i>  <i>Staff competency</i>  <i>Staff confidence</i>  <i>Staff collaboration</i>  <i>Staff assessment literacy</i>  <i>Better assessment design?</i>  <i>Did it lead to better curriculum design</i></p>	<p>What were the impacts on staff? Do staff have a better understanding of assessment?  Was assessment design improved as a consequence of what you did?</p>	<p>The setting up of the assessment, support and guidance processes was a lot of work, as was responding to student questions about novel assessment tasks outside of contact time (I set up a Padlet to help deal with student questions). However, the process also increased my assessment and feedback literacy and made me think more about the purposes and value of assessment and feedback practices.</p> <p>Seeing the impact on students' confidence in producing innovative outputs and in assessment literacy in general was also a great boost to my confidence.</p> <p>The overarching consequence of this assessment and feedback redesign is that I will never return to the essay-exam format. I saw how the assessment and feedback practices and activities in this module developed students' skills and confidence, made them want to engage with the content and new assessment tasks, and created an enjoyable and productive study environment.</p> <p>I would certainly encourage colleagues to try to move toward more inclusive, diverse and innovative assessment and feedback practices.</p>
<p><b>How sustainable do you think these changes can be?</b></p> <p><i>Are changes embedded within curriculum? Any longer term gains?</i>  <i>Development of effective assessment networks</i>  <i>Changes in attitudes?</i>  <i>Upskilling of staff</i>  <i>More efficient use of resource</i>  <i>Impacts on policy?</i></p>	<p>Sustainability: any longer term gains from the project? Has what you implemented become part of business as usual – will it be maintained?</p>	<p>There is some broader impact possible within the Subject area in the School, but much depends on the investment (and workload and time) of colleagues.</p> <p>There is some really interesting and innovative work going on that is student-focused and engaging, but whether this is related to my assessment and feedback practices is unknown.</p>
<p><b>What did YOU gain from this experience?</b></p> <p><i>What personal learning do you take away from the project?</i>  <i>(Use reflective templates to support evaluative activities)</i></p>	<p>What was the impact on those colleagues and students leading the case studies?  What were the key learning points for you?  What would you have done differently in retrospect?  How could you improve your design?</p>	<p>Confidence and determination that things <b>can</b> change, even if it is at a local level. This redesign has demonstrated that we don't have to stick with traditional approaches; another way is possible, and might actually be better.</p> <p>In terms of improving the design, I would possibly reduce the number of formative assessment tasks; feedback from students suggested that they began to find all of the small tasks overwhelming and difficult to juggle.</p>
<p><b>Any general thoughts or advice about</b></p>	<p>Transferability</p>	<p>Don't be overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. When you first look at what's</p>

<p><b><i>using the EAT framework?</i></b></p> <p><i>What are the key messages that would be useful for others trying to do this?</i></p>	<p>Were there any subject specific findings that have relevance to the sector? How can learning be adapted and utilized elsewhere? What are the key messages/learning from this work?</p>	<p>possible when redesigning assessment and feedback practices, it can be overwhelming to unpick and understand what can/should change, what support is needed and how to communicate everything in a way that's meaningful and impactful to the students. But it's important to take time to break the tasks down into manageable chunks and work out what's necessary and what might be simply a nice extra.</p> <p>In terms of the process I went through, I worked from what I wanted to do, and from intuitive ideas, and then mapped them onto the framework (rather than the other way round). I used the framework to help guide and package my thoughts and ideas into something cohesive and coherent. I then revised those ideas based on the realities of delivering the assessment in this way. It was an iterative process.</p>
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