

ASSESSMENT USING LEARNING PORTFOLIOS AND SELF DEVELOPED PROBLEMS

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This paper describes changes made to the internal assessment component of a third year financial accounting paper. The current practices and the rationale for the changes will first be considered to place the paper in context. In the changes made, two tests conducted at set intervals during the semester were supplemented by two additional items of internal assessment, a self developed problem and a learning portfolio. These items of assessment were designed to be completed over the duration of the semester and were aimed at engendering in students a deep rather than a surface approach to learning.

The concept of the self developed problem will be explained. This is an unstructured item of assessment aimed at enhancing student creativity and ensuring they become more actively engaged in their learning process. Here students are required to develop their own original problem and solution from the work covered in the paper. Students are free to select the individual items to be included in their self developed problem. The development of the assessment criteria for this item of coursework will be reviewed.

The learning portfolio is a record of the students learning over the semester. Within their learning portfolios, students are required to complete a number of tasks. Each aimed at improving critical thinking skills and creativity. The rationale for the selection of the individual tasks included in the learning portfolio will be provided. Students are also required to maintain a personal or reflective section aimed at personalising and deepening the quality of their learning. This section is also aimed at assisting students realise how the various modules covered in the paper integrate with each other. This in turn should assist them in the preparation of their self developed problem. The development of the assessment criteria for this item of coursework will also be reviewed.

The paper reviews some of the difficulties faced by staff in convincing students of the benefit of unstructured items of assessment such as a learning portfolio and self developed problem where exemplars or detailed guidelines do not exist for them to follow. Finally, extracts from learning portfolios will identify some of the difficulties faced by students in dealing with unstructured items of assessment.