

Using Authentic Assessment to Improve Inclusivity in Large Management Cohorts

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What is Authentic Assessment (AA)?

- Authentic assessment has been discussed in the education literature since the 1980s (Swaffield, 2011)
- Gulikers et al. (2004, p.69) define it as *“an assessment requiring students to use the same competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life”*
- Wiggins (1993, p.229) describes as *“tasks [that] are either replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult citizens and consumers or professionals in the field”*

What is Authentic Assessment (AA)?

Some of the specific characteristics of authentic assessment (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2013)

- Challenging: real-world problems are complex
- Involve a product/outcome
- Transferability of knowledge to a real-world application
- Metacognition: combination of critical thinking, self-evaluation, and personal development
- Involves feedback and reflective process
- Collaboration

Why Authentic Assessment (AA)?

“What and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed” (Biggs and Tang, 2011. P.169)

- Employability (the biggest driver) (Karunanayaka and Naidu, 2021)
- Academic integrity in the face of generative AI (Baines et al., 2025; Fawns et al. 2025)
- Higher level of alignment with constructivist pedagogy (Baines, et al., 2025)
- Inclusive assessment (Murphy et al., 2017)

Why Inclusive Assessment (IA)?

- Highest level of student diversity in UK HE
- Making reasonable adjustments: a response to the UK Equality Act (2010)
- Broader conceptualisation of IA: *“Inclusive assessment is about “the design and use of fair and effective assessment methods and practices that enable all students to demonstrate to their full potential what they know, understand and can do” (Tai et al., 2024, p. 1937)*
- Making assessment inclusive from the outset: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Multiple ways of expression

How are AA and IA linked in the literature?

- Deep learning, assessment *for* learning (e.g. Bain, 2023)
- Higher level of engagement (e.g. Quinlan et al, 2025)
- Student agency (e.g. Quinlan et al, 2025)
- Authenticity as equity (e.g. Forsyth and Evans, 2019)

Authentic Assessment; Panacea or Silver bullet?

Tensions in design and challenges of Authentic Assessment:

- Whose authenticity matters? (e.g. Forsyth and Evans, 2019)
- Students' choice? Issue of fairness
- Uncertainty in students' future contexts and work (Fawns et al, 2025)
- Unfamiliarity for students
- Onerous for students (Fawns et al, 2025)

Our experience– cohort and unit context

- Unit subject: Organisational behaviour in projectized work
- Diverse cohort: Serving multiple management programmes
- Postgraduate management degrees: A high level of heterogeneity
- Large cohort: around 300 students
- International students: more than 90% non-English-speaking domiciles

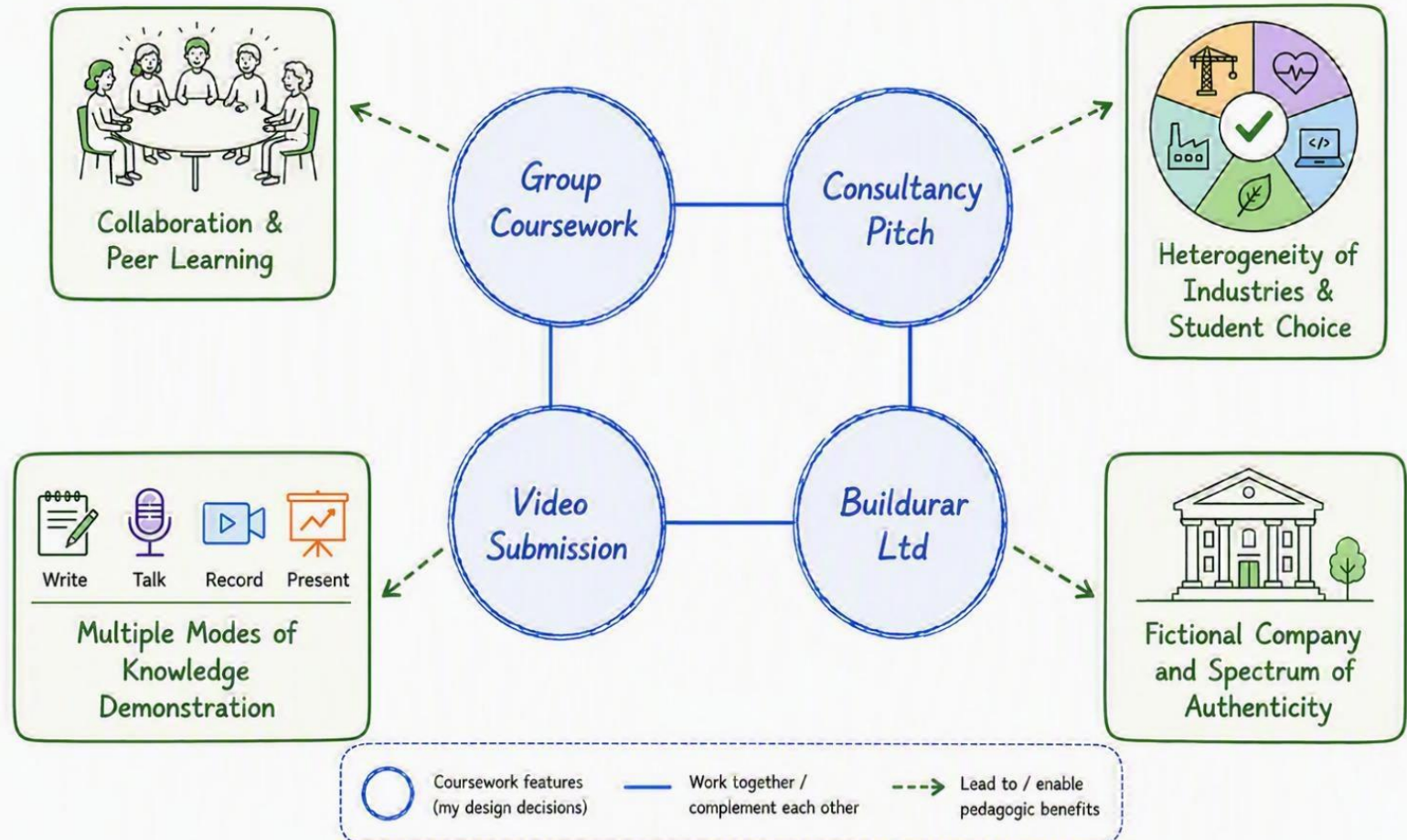
Our experience– positions taken

- The ‘real world’ is not a naturally inclusive context; The notion of students' authentic mode (e.g. Forsyth and Evans, 2019; Fawns et al, 2025)
- The value of collaboration in Authentic Assessment (Ashford-Rowe, 2014); so, group coursework is not a drawback
- A spectrum of authenticity rather than viewing an assessment wholly authentic or inauthentic (e.g. Fawns et al, 2025)

Our experience– Coursework Design

Providing a group consultancy video on technology-enabled remote working policy for Buildurar Ltd

How coursework design Features support authentic assessment for inclusivity



Challenges and Opportunities

Resources: Massification of higher education

Onerous for students: Reflecting this in the study budget can help

Mismatch with students' understanding of real work: Further support on what employability means can help

Assessment integrity

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