Assessment design in the first year of study

The focus of this work has been to increase participation and improve retention rates in universities. Over the past ten years there has been much scholarly investigation into the first year experience in higher education. The focus of this work has been to increase participation and improve retention rates in universities, by curricula that more effectively supports student transition to university, and by actively developing the literacies and understanding that students require to flourish at university.

- How well do we design assessment tasks in first year that build confidence and skills? Are assessment tasks across first year scaffolded appropriately with incremental degrees of complexity?
- How well do we articulate our assessment expectations to students? How well are we preparing students for the forms of assessment and the kinds of support they require to experience success in first year? This includes helping students to understand academic language and conventions and the quality of work required.
- Are we providing appropriate and timely feedback that provides information to students about progress and achievement?

Web resources


This article provides an excellent discussion of assessment issues in first year university.

This article focuses closely on assessment design and provides a first year assessment model that provides for transition, development and achievement.