Case Study Title: Using Diverse Assessment Methods

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Institution: Ayrshire College
Subject area: Social Science
Programme/Course:
Module/Unit: Various units across our curriculum including Psychology, Sociology, Criminology, History and Politics
SCQF Level: 4-8
Assessment Name:
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1. **How would you summarise your practice case study?**
   We wanted to demonstrate being able to utilise diverse assessment methods for learners. Social Science units are flexible and we have a lot of choice in terms of how students can present this information, so we allow choice which includes essay format, report, PowerPoint, Microsoft SWAY, oral presentation, audio recording, academic poster, podcasts and quizzes.

2. **Why did you develop or enhance your assessment and what was your rationale?**
   We are aware that, where units give us this freedom, it is empowering for learners to choose which format they would like to submit their assessment materials in. Learners embrace choice, and using their strengths in assessments, and we feel this provides opportunity for choice and helps to decrease cognitive load if learners have choice to pick the format to present their work.

3. **What enhancements or changes did you implement in assessment in making this more innovative, diverse or inclusive of diverse learner cohorts?**
   We were able to provide example formats of previous assessments with different topics (anonymised) to allow learners to see different options and visualise layouts. In some classes we allow a full choice of presentation style, in others lecturers might encourage a choice between two or three formats, as we recognise having too many options can sometimes be overwhelming.

4. **What informed your approach to the changes you made, e.g. student feedback, observations of student difficultly, insights from literature or research findings, assessment pass rates etc.?**
   It is clear that 'one size fits all' is an outdated concept and due to the flexibility with our units and the nature of our subjects we embraced the opportunity to allow choice. We noticed some students were very good verbally in class and could articulate their thoughts and knowledge very well verbally but when it came to writing this in an assessment, they would struggle with that format. Learners also gave feedback that they were experiencing 'essay fatigue' and providing choice has resulted in learners feeding back that assessments were more engaging and some actually enjoyed completing them! Allowing creativity helps us to meet the needs of all learners, and of our neurodivergent learners.

5. **What key changes have you seen as a result of this change to your assessment practice?**
   We see less anxiety and stress surrounding assessment. Some learners prefer essays, and this is great, but those who struggle with similar formats for assessments really embraced the opportunity to complete their assessment in a different way. Some learners commented that this improved their digital skills, e.g. constructing an academic poster or SWAY presentation, and they were able to use technology in new ways.

6. **How are you evaluating the effectiveness of these enhancements or changes implemented?**
   We seek feedback from students through all lecturers and we ask a question in our curriculum survey about their experiences of assessments and having more choice in how to present their work. The feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

7. **Tips for practitioners:**

Do you have any tips for practitioners wanting to make similar enhancements or changes in their assessments that you could add in?

Learners feel empowered and part of the process when they can take ownership of the direction of assessments. Example assessments are always useful for a visual cue and we provide structured guidance for assessments in all formats, ensuring learners focus

on assessment standards and outcomes, but have more freedom to format this in a way that is appealing and suitable for them. We tend to work on assessments on an ongoing basis in our FE levels (4, 5, 6) to allow learners to work on this throughout the semester and allow us to check progress with each assessment outcome, rather than one large submission at the end for all subjects, which can cause cognitive overload and anxiety. Spreading work throughout the semester allows learners to build confidence in their knowledge and try new ways to show us what they have learned.