

CASE STUDY 21 - SUMMARY

NAME

Simon Hall

LEVEL

Undergraduate

COURSE

AGE2012F - The First People

CATEGORY

Expanding/Enhancing/Adapting

FACULTY

Science

One sentence summary

Students had to summarise a package of readings which were linked to an essay topic that they selected. The objective is to create an authentic reading and writing exercise for the students.



Context

This is a course that I convened and taught only in 2019 and 2020. The assessment is based on previous assessment exercises that I designed for other courses that I teach. The emphasis and objectives of the assessment exercise was to get students to read key papers deeply and to practice writing. In ERT, fewer summaries were assigned and they linked more closely to an extended essay.



Outcomes/ Lessons learned

The summaries worked well and, because they were linked to the essay, students were incentivised to engage with the material. The quality of feedback is really important and that could have been improved upon. Comparative monitoring of a student's progress from beginning to end would be more effective in terms of student learning.



Purpose:

The assessment comprises formative, summative and diagnostic elements to help identify students who struggle with writing and, more specifically, develop the skill of summarising a piece of writing. The assessment applied both to humanities and science students. Science students, in particular, have limited or no experience of structuring reading and research for longer essay assignments. The summaries were graded as a form of continuous assessment.



Recommendation

Requiring students to do short precis-type assignments around the core readings linked to a longer assessment offers lower stakes writing practice and incentivises students to engage with the readings well in advance of the final assignment. Improving the student feedback could further enhance the value.



Process

It's a simple task of precis, with no interpretation, within a limited wordage (usually 500 - 700 words) and has to be in the student's own words. Assignments and resources were uploaded and available on Vula. There were four packages of readings, which were all directed at four separate essay questions. Students selected an essay topic and then summarised papers linked to that topic.