

CASE STUDY 2 - SUMMARY

NAME

Zarina Patel

LEVEL

Postgraduate

COURSE

EGS4047F - Environmental Policy and Practice

CATEGORY

Expanding, enhancing or adapting

FACULTY

Science

One sentence summary

The course shifted from being based on a site-based case study, where students were going to do field work, to being a series of lectures about the site hosted via Zoom. City officials joined as guest lecturers. The open-book exam became a 48-hour take home exam, which was a more accurate way of assessing the applied skills relevant to the course.



Context

The course was initially co-developed with the City of Cape Town officials to be a live case study of Dunoon, with students doing fieldwork to research the issues. Students would then be assigned a theme and each would give a presentation based on the literature to the class. Because of ERT, city officials who were committed to co-teaching joined the course via Zoom as guest lecturers and as respondents in the student presentations for particular thematic issues. Students benefited from hearing from people directly involved in policy and practice.



Purpose:

The course normally comprises 12 thematic issues over 12 weeks. Students are assigned a particular theme and given some guiding questions. They are then required to present that issue to the class. Two weeks later, the student presenting would submit a written essay on their theme in the form of a proposal to the city manager. This is a formative assessment involving doing a presentation, getting feedback, having a facilitated discussion, and then preparing a written submission standing in the shoes of a city official putting forward ideas. Skills development involving reading, analytical skills, presentation and writing is the key motivator around assessment design. The exam assessed the application of these skills and how well they could argue a case rather than rote recall.



Process

The exam is an open-book task where students have to write a 2000-3000-word policy analysis from a particular perspective. Students have to argue their case and provide supporting evidence. It was a 48-hour take-home exam, which was posted on Vula and through a WhatsApp group, and then submitted via Vula Assignments.



Outcomes/ Lessons learned

There was a lot more mutual learning and collaboration. This may have been the reason for the increased level and depth of engagement in the exam compared to previous years. Students enjoyed learning from the city officials and it made the course more dynamic, but they would have benefitted from more time in and between each session. Having a regular routine and starting each Zoom session by asking everyone how they were doing was really helpful.



Recommendation

Bringing professionals/ practitioners into the (virtual) classroom to present about real world contexts was very effective. Providing an extended time for the take-home exam resulted in students engaging more deeply with the task posed, rather than relying on rote recall.