

Final year dissertation replaced with viva voce

Student with dyslexia

University of the Arts, London. BA Sound Arts Design.

Full case study available from:

<http://www.creativeassessment.org.uk/resources/documents/OralDissertationvivaSymmonds.pdf>



Description of alternative assessment:

The student completed a one hour *viva voce* as an alternative to an 8-10,000 word dissertation. The viva consisted of a 30 minute oral presentation on the dissertation subject, followed by a 30 minutes oral defence of their argument.

Learning outcomes assessed:

- Employ an appropriate level of research, organisation and presentation skills in your work and articulate arguments in verbal form.
- Demonstrate a comprehensive critical understanding of a specific issue, subject or problem within the broad area of Sound Arts Design.
- Demonstrate skills developed during the course, illustrating original thinking, in-depth research and a good knowledge of the specified field.

How does this assessment improve student learning?

The assessment is 'fit for purpose'; if the disability lies within reading and writing then the production of script is not a fair assessment and offers little deep learning. The assessment improves self-esteem and notions of ownership. As a vehicle of expression it is directly vocationally related to creative practice, art criticisms / storyboards and presentations.

What went well?

The student explored strength in orality. He edited his work for the first time. He felt confident. His feedback was incorporated into the CD rom and handbook. He became so orally confident that he co-presented at the Writing PAD conference at Goldsmith's University the autumn after his viva voce in 2006. He impressed performance tutors from Dartington and was effective in conducting a plenary with tutors probing his experience. He gained a 2:1 award on his own terms. His process prevented all notions of plagiarism and the teachers and the learner were positively engaged. He was able to ask clarification questions of the tutors in his defence. The clarification of avenues of enquiry led to a full and effective response from the student. Orally he managed time and sequence. The compilation of his portfolio was prepared simultaneously with his oral preparation; it improved his ability in written communication in producing the 'walkthrough' explanatory A4 sheet to accompany his oral delivery.

What went well? continued...

His presentation was more structured, concise and relevant. Having been his dyslexia support tutor over a few years since Foundation, I can confirm the improvements. He had control over his learning and engaged in considerable reflection with other students, fellow students with dyslexia, and ultimately himself as part of Personal and Professional Development. The exit assignment for PPD (PDP) was a dissertation diary. He rid himself of learning demons - no more 'could do better'; he had done better as he did not have to be measured by the production of text.

His work initiated the introduction of oral delivery as accommodated assessment for students with disabilities at the University of the Arts, London.

Staff tested their curriculum design and content using another vehicle that eliminated plagiarism. They recognised orality not only as a graduate skill, but also as central to the work of the creative practitioner.