

Poster presentations as an assessment method in Social Work education

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Course details	
Course title	BA Social Work
Level	Undergraduate
Year	3
Module title	Family and marital therapy
Discipline/Subject areas	Social work

Activity details (total approx. 500 words)	
What I did	This case study describes the experience of using posters for assessment and includes feedback from students.
Why I did it	In social work the ability to verbally support assessments undertaken in the workplace is an important skill which is not usually assessed. Using a poster presentation as an assessment strategy offers some unexpected opportunities as the students have to respond to questions from the assessors based on the material presented in the poster.
What I wanted to achieve	The aim was to develop an assessment method that was non-linear and moved away from essay assignments
A short description of what I did	<p>Students were asked to demonstrate their learning in the form of a poster to be presented and marked in class time. This meant there was rapid feedback on what they presented. Each poster was allocated fifteen minutes and there were clear marking criteria including: whether the poster was self explanatory, whether there was a helpful amount of information on the poster, whether the use of theory was appropriate and whether the verbal responses of the student were supportive and enhancing.</p> <p>The method of poster assessment was introduced into an elective module in family and marital therapy. This module looks at systems theory as a means of understanding family processes and seemed particularly suitable for a visual representation which could demonstrate the interactive nature of parts of the family systems.</p>
What worked well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poster offers a visual presentation of a piece of work and encourages dialogue about the work. • There is opportunity for direct discussion and exchange of ideas with the presenter. • Posters were presented in a scheduled teaching session. • Feedback to the students is rapid.

<p>Problems and/or issues</p>	<p>Some students have a deep seated performance anxiety which is not conducive to the poster as a positive learning experience. Comments on the assessment included concern about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'My lack of confidence in relation to my ability to retain relevant information and to disseminate it in a way worthy of a pass mark'. • 'My lack of confidence in my artistic ability to create a stunning poster worthy of a pass mark!' • 'My shyness would I make a fool of myself?'
<p>What students thought about it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'To represent the complexities of a family situation I decided to use the London Underground as it is a widely recognised image but equally it is widely acknowledged as quite a formidable form of getting from A to B. In any family people have a plan of how they are going to get from one stage to another but like travellers on the underground families can end up in situations they never knew existed.' • '...I believe that the visual representation of the family system highlighted my knowledge of and insight into the complexities of family dynamics and therapeutic intervention. This is something I feel may not have been so easy to demonstrate in written assignment form.'
<p>Key messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters offer an alternative to written assessments. • Posters create the opportunity to have an immediate dialogue with students about their work. • Posters can be assessed in classroom time and are therefore not an added burden to lecturers. • Students are surprised at how much work they have to put into the posters and report having to do more reading.
<p>Related documents or links</p>	<p>Akister, J., Bannon, A. & Mullender-Lock, H. (2000) 'Poster Presentations in Social Work Education Assessment: A case study', <i>Innovations in Education and Training International</i>, 37(3) 229-233.</p>
<p>Any other comments</p>	<p>Overall the experience of using this method of assessment has been extremely positive. It seems an efficient way of teaching through assessment and of developing verbal and presentation skills.</p>