Charles Sturt University

Interactive Oral Assessments User Guide

Developed by the Interactive Oral Assessment Community of Practice 2023

Division of Learning and Teaching

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Contents

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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Interactive Oral Assessments (IOA) are authentic scenario-based conversations where the assessor and learners(s) adopt distinct roles and interact with each other to deal with issues that develop during the conversation. As each learner engages with the scenario, a unique interactive assessment emerges as the conversation evolves.

This interaction fosters personalised relationships between educators and learners which promotes academic integrity by addressing specific concerns about cheating and collusion. They can also help in the avoidance of plagiarism and addressing the challenges posed by AI tools.

Further, they can help students to gain confidence in verbal communication skills. Public speaking is one of the most common fears but also a skill we need to engender in our students – IOAs are a gentle way to assess these skills, especially with students who are very nervous.

SUPPORTING CURRICULUM INNOVATION

If you are considering implementing an IOA as a curriculum innovation in your subject or Course, we suggest you work with a group of supportive peers and an Educational Designer who is familiar with this method of assessment. This allows you to draw on colleague's insights and experiences as you offer each other structure and support. We have a group of experienced peers who are happy to share their experience and advice, we invite you to contact Marcelle Droulers, Marissa Olsen, Marie-Louise Craig or Emma Colvin.

CS academics who have successfully implemented IOAs note that working together in a community of practice (CoP) made the redevelopment of their subject assessments 'fun instead of terrifying' and most just can't imagine doing it without sharing the experience and advice of a CoP. They suggest joining or establishing a collegial group approximately 10 Weeks before start of session (November for 30 session and April for 60 session) to give you time to work through each subject.

A – DESIGN

STEP 1: DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE TASK/SCENARIO

When you are conceptualising and designing an authentic scenario aligned to professional skills and knowledge:

1.	Reflect on the nature of the scenario and the participation required – specifically the professional knowledge and skills you will be assessing.

2. Consider how the scenario will allow for unscripted conversation (not question and answer or presentation).

3. Ensure the IOA links to a cohesive assessment regime that sequences assessment as learners develop knowledge and skills progressively across the subject.

4. Incorporate the required level of disciplinary knowledge to meet the learning outcome and participate in an authentic professionally focused conversation with an assessor. Ensure it is suitable for the level of the learner (i.e., first year or third year).

Diverse disciplines have diverse scenarios and tasks. This Padlet has examples of authentic scenarios across a range of disciplines including engineering, leadership, languages, health and nutrition, and criminology.

STEP 2: REVISE THE SUBJECT ASSESSMENT REGIME

IOAs are designed to align with Course and Subject learning outcomes and involve the creation of detailed criteria and standards which make learners aware of the context and criteria for their assessment. This DLT web page gives a good overview of this assessment approach.

An IOA is part of a scaffolded assessment regime where assessment tasks are purposefully designed to link with and build on each other. The aim is to scaffold to and from an IOA to help students develop higher order thinking skills. Therefore, all assessment tasks in the subjects are reviewed and revised to meet this objective.

To begin with, the placement of an IOA in the assessment schedule is finalised. For example, it can be the final summative assessment in the subject or can be an earlier diagnostic assessment.

After that consider what other assessments can be adapted to help develop students' skills and confidence to undertake an IOA successfully. The aim is to use authentic discipline-specific assessments that help to develop students' agency and build toward mastery.

If the IOA the not the final summative assessment, consider how learners can best use the learning from their IOA to improve their performance in the subsequent assessment/s.

STEP 3: DESIGN THE RUBRIC

We recommend a simple rubric design with no more than 3 criteria, and one clearly stated requirement per criterion. Think about what is most important for students and their learning in relation to the learning outcomes. Here are some suggestions of criteria to consider: communication skills, theoretical knowledge, application of theory, making recommendations, and reflective practice.

The rubric needs to be differentiated enough to provide a spread of grades but simple enough to be able to grade a student quickly between interviews. Simplicity also helps to provide clear and targeted feedback during the debrief period. For example, "you used theoretical terminology correctly throughout and applied some concepts accurately. However, you were not as confident in responding to prompts for applying that knowledge to make recommendations."

Refining the rubric is an iterative process and it's best to revisit it after you have run your IOAs the first time.

B - DEVELOPMENT

Preparing students for the IOA and managing expectations

If the design process steps described above are followed, then student expectations of the IOA should align naturally with the intentions of the assessor.

Early in the session introduce the assessment schedule, explaining how the IOA is situated within the subject design. At this stage it is not necessary to give detailed information about the IOA, only that further support and resources will be provided closer to the assessment date. Highlight the nature of each assessment, what skills they are designed to assess and how the assessments complement each other.

Information session

Approximately 3 weeks before the IOA, conduct an information session for the students. Highlight the weighting of the assessment to emphasise to students that although this is an unscripted conversation, it must be theoretically informed. On the other hand, it is not recommended that they rely too heavily on prepared notes, or they may miss important conversational cues or become flustered with interruptions from the assessor. During this session you can show the example recording and the marking exercise (see below).

Example/mock recording

Preparing an example recording is an ideal way to orientate students quickly to the requirements and expectations of IOA. During your first delivery of the subject, you could prepare a scripted or improvised recording with a colleague. Alternatively, if you are running the subject for a second time you could seek a student's permission to show a video of a real IOA to the class.

Consider the following when planning your mock recording:

- The aim of the mock recording is to showcase what an IOA looks like.
- Choose a scenario that is different from the one you will be using for your students.
- Incorporate common errors that students are likely to make highlighting how they will get an opportunity to overcome it.
- Model links to theoretical concepts in your responses because, even if it is just a conversation, ultimately it is an assessment.
- Recommend that you base your IOA discussion around content that students have already completed that way they will be able to follow your responses.

Example marking exercise

Once you have showcased your sample recording to students, the next step is to get them to mark your performance against the IOA rubric. It is an important exercise to improve students' assessment literacy. It helps them to understand what is expected of them in their IOA.

Pop-up practice session

You may consider scheduling an extra 'pop-up' practice session (or two) where students join you to rehearse for the IOA. The session is informal, not recorded and scheduled at different times to the main class for those who don't normally attend class meetings.

Academic skills workshop

The academic skills team have prepared a slide deck with instructions for students on how to prepare for their IOA. This slide deck is available for academics to use themselves or they can book their campus representative to visit one of their sessions to deliver it.

Instructions to student in registration

Including clear instructions on the calendar booking system ensures students are well prepared for the meeting.

C - IMPLEMENTATION

Booking system – this information is current as of December 2023

Calendly is a free and easy-to-use tool for handling student bookings but it can be replaced with another booking system. If you do use it, let students know that there is no notification for booking confirmation (in the free version of Calendly) and they should record the appointment on their personal calendar immediately. The bookings will automatically load into your Outlook calendar.

The free version may only provide full access for one month - one of us got caught out with this where we added all the bells and whistles, but they stopped halfway through the assessment and caused confusion. We suggest using only the basic version, or you can use another booking system. Here is a suggested message to put on the Calendly (or other) booking form:

This is where you book your appointment for

[SUBJECT CODE ASSESSMENT NUMBER - Interactive oral].

Appointments are available from [DATE] – [DATE].

Attendance at this meeting is a requirement for passing the subject.

Please log into the meeting punctually and be prepared with:

- *Stable internet*
- *Quiet, undisturbed conditions*
- *Headset*
- *Video camera*
- *Photo identification card*

The session will be recorded.

Zoom portal/recording

Prepare a Zoom meeting room set to record and with waiting room. Add the link to the Calendly (or other) booking.

Time

Generally, it's recommended that an IOA is approximately 10-15 minutes for 40% weighted assessment. Timing depends on many factors to be discussed with an experienced educational designer. Factors to consider are nature of task; scaffolding; degree of preparation leading up to the assessment; feedback from

experience; nature of the student (e.g. disability, diversity); experience of the assessor; weighting of the assessment.

Preparation and debrief

Prepare students by allowing approximately 5 minutes before the recording begins to settle into the space and feel comfortable. This is a good time to check they are clear about what is expected that the meeting is recorded, and a timer will be set. You can let them know that they will be given the opportunity to finish what they are talking about before the recording stops. Reassure them that if anything disruptive happens to let the assessor know and the recording can be stopped at any time. Check their student identification and ask if they are ready to proceed.

Buffer in 5 minutes after the IOA for a debrief. This may be as simple as 'how did that go for you?' and/or to offer more specific feedback on how they went in the assessment. Be careful what you say as a student may complain later if they are led to believe they will receive a certain grade and their expectations are disappointed. Highlighting one strength and one weakness could be useful when students must wait many weeks for their final grade. A great feature of IOA is that feedback occurs by the nature of the conversation however with weaker students they may not pick up on these cues.

Finally allow some time at the end to complete your marking rubric. We recommend about 15 minutes extra time beyond the IOA for welcome, debrief, and grading.

Verify student identity

Before the IOA the student should show some form of photo identification e.g. CS student card or driver's license.

Pre-IOA welcome

Have short chat to welcome the student, check that they understand what is expected and what degree of agency you are expecting them to take in the conversation.

Grading with Turnitin – *this information current for 2023 in I2*

Recording each student's feedback and grade is quick and easy through Turnitin and so can be finalised between each appointment. For instructions see the separate document 'Turnitin marking help guide for IOA'.

Please note that you have to download the PDFs of the rubrics under i2. We found it far less painful to do it at the time of marking than going back and doing it for every student later. This may be better with Brightspace.

Moderation

Apply the usual moderation processes to these assessments. We suggest you review the recordings of the first few and have a marking meeting to debrief. We also suggest you debrief with markers at the end of the session and before providing general feedback to the students.

Please contact Amita Krautloher akrautloher@csu.edu.au to share feedback on this document.