

OFF CAMPUS LEARNING: BACHELOR OF CULINARY ARTS VIA ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL)

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This Powerful Assessment (PA) case study is explained by Principle Lecture/Academic Leader, Adrian Woodhouse, of Otago Polytechnic's Food Design Department. The PA that will be examined is the Bachelor of Culinary Arts via Assessment of Prior Learning, which is off campus, and predominately field based, this process has been in place since 2011.

The Bachelor of Culinary Arts via Assessment of Prior Learning is a values based education programme is off campus learning. It is a one year undergraduate programme, but learners are already established within their professional field (at least 10 years within the hospitality field, and three-five years as Head Chef/comparable position and responsibilities). The Programme compares and measures learners' knowledge against formal qualifications.

Rather than the traditional education assessment and set up, the programme is facilitated by practitioners, who have all had ten plus years' experience within the field.

When it comes to understanding the Framework of Practice, the actual methodology of learning, it is a notion of values, and how those values underpin students' learning. As a teacher, and as a learner, I don't tend to believe in assessment in the traditional sense, I adhere to a humanistic approach of learning. In many traditional courses, there is formative assessment throughout a programme and then a final assessment like an exam at the end of the course. Within the BCAAPL, there is formative assessment throughout the process, but the programme is structured so that the emphasis is on the summative assessment at the very end of the process.

Throughout the year, there are two workshops that the learners and facilitators must attend. These provide a platform for rich discussion, unpacking traditional views and values of education. Many of our learners and facilitators are not traditional learners, so these workshops enable us to provide a platform for academic discussion in a non-traditional format.

In order to assign a learner with a facilitator, each learner is tasked with providing a 'food memory morning tea'. This food memory task enables the learner to unpack who they are, how they see food, and from there, we as assessors can see their values and begin to understand their framework of practice. Based on the food memory morning tea, learners are assigned a facilitator that aligns with the learners' values. This sets up the relationship between the facilitators, learners, and assessors from the beginning.

Formative assessment is a process throughout the programme, but papers and assessments are stair-cased towards a final learning point. Writing skills are stair-cased, and each assessment builds upon the last. Rather than stand-alone assessments, the dialogue and conversations that occur within each task, unpack and challenge both the learners' and facilitators' views and values. We have found that generally the writing skills drastically improve over the course, and that the work that is produced is of a high standard. We believe that this is in part due to the stair-cased nature of our assessments, so that the skills gained are able to be honed and built over time. I like to think that our course outline is less about 'ticking boxes', and much more about 'connecting boxes'.

When dealing with values based education, it is impossible to have one set pathway, a 'cookie cutter' if you will, as everyone has a different set of values, and they present in a multitude of ways. Good design is based on other people's needs, the awareness that values and needs also differ based on place, space, and experiences. Coming to terms with this, and adapting this awareness into your framework of practice is a transformative process, and is where some of the most critical and meaningful learning occurs.

Throughout the process it's a constant question for both the facilitators and learners; what are the learners' motivated by? What are their values? Why are their values important? What does the learner want out of the process? These questions inform the assessment and facilitative process, and guide the learner and facilitator through the programme. There is an interesting tension between meaningful learning, and the learners' who want to get the top grades, how can you get an A+ on a values based education? It is interesting to explore these questions, and values with the learner; why do they value those grades, how does this reflect in their wider value set and framework of practice?

The entire programme (although broken up into assessments), ultimately build towards a capstone assessment. Assessments along way can be indicative rather than final marks, if things come together at the end, then there is capacity for the assessors go back and readdress assessments and marks. The end goal that learners' are working towards is the completion of a portfolio and an oral defence to a panel of assessors. These two components unpack personal and professional upbringing, key formative factors, articulate case studies, authentic knowledge reflective in practice, demonstrating their professional framework of practice. Within these meaningful assessments, values are challenged, especially within the oral presentation.

The entire programme demonstrates powerful assessment and meaningful learning. It is a values based education process, and showcases how knowledge is created within professional practice. Our aim is to promote and facilitate lifelong learning, and enable people to find their place within practice.

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