

## Transcript

00:00:00 Jonny Barnes

Hello and welcome to the BILT broadcast.

00:00:04 Jonny Barnes

We are continuing our assessment series this week by looking at how we prepare students for assessment. I've spoken to two of my Student Fellow colleagues to talk about their favorite ways their lecturers have prepared them for their summative assessments. First up is Chloe, who's studying an MA in English literature. Chloe, what is the most helpful thing that a lecturer has done to prepare you for a summative assessment?

00:00:30 Chloe Reed

Oh, well I have to say in my degree we didn't have many uhm formative assessments, but I did come once have to do a formative presentation before a summative group presentation in my second year of university.

00:00:47 Jonny Barnes

OK, interesting, So what was, so you mentioned that the summative assessment was a group presentation. How was having a sort of a draft helpful?

00:00:58 Chloe Reed

Well, I think it was our first presentation back, sort of during second year, in fact, I think it might have even been my first graded presentation at university. We don't tend to do too many in my subjects, which is English. So I think the process of standing up before a seminar group, almost as kind of a bit of a rehearsal and in front of the lecturer, was helpful because it made the actual presentation less daunting. And we were also given feedback as well at that point, which I think was helpful because it wasn't often that we got feedback before a presentation, and I think for a course that doesn't have a lot of presentations to do, I think people we like can get quite scared of presentations and kind of. I think the idea of it can kind of make us almost like lose our focus a little bit kind of get a bit more panicky than we would for an essay that or task that is more within our comfort zone. So I think that that was helpful because it kind of helps you like set up for the summative assessment a bit more, and I guess also something that again, made us feel more relaxed as the fact that we had to come up with like silly group names that were kind of like related to our presentation topics and as silly as that sounds, I think it was like a really nice thing to do and it just made the whole process of assessment more fun and also just kind of encourage like collaboration between the groups as well, it definitely like helped me bond with my presentation group.

00:02:43 Jonny Barnes

I love that I love silly group names that sounds amazing. So you mentioned that you sort of do quite a few essay based and written assignments. Which types of assessments do you feel most comfortable and confident doing?

00:03:00 Chloe Reed

Yeah, I think in English we do mainly do sort of essay based tasks and I think that this is this is correct like for the subject. I think it makes sense for us to do essays because that is what, that's what people do like in the field, I guess. But I do think the coursework for English, for me personally, has always been more effective than exams. I think exam based assessments for my subject don't, just don't quite really cut it, don't really allow the student to kind of show a deep understanding of the topic, which at degree level you really have to, you really have to be showing and also like, I just don't think that they're like particularly like practical for the subject either. It's very difficult to prepare for an English exam and there's like, you know for the type of jobs that people go for I don't think that exams are particularly helpful in setting people up for that. So I guess I would always advocate coursework over exam based.

00:04:18 Jonny Barnes

Cool, thank you for your insights, Chloe.

00:04:22 Chloe Reed

You're welcome.

00:04:26 Jonny Barnes

Next up is Sama, who is a second year law student. Sama, what is the most helpful thing that a lecturer has done to prepare you for a summative assessment?

00:04:37 Sama Zou'bi

So the way the law works is that we have formative assessments in January and they're optional, and then we have summative assessments throughout April, May and June we have coursework which are long extensive essays, and then we have this year we had TOBAs which are the timed open book assessments instead of exams, and I think because the opportunity to submit assessment or to submit writing for feedback throughout the year is quite limited to this one chance. The real benefit comes from what the professors or what the tutor group for the specific module do after we submit those formatives. So for example for one of my modules, the tutor obviously gave us extensive feedback and gave us the opportunity to meet with him one on one, which is quite helpful. And then he had several revision sessions for the whole cohort, which were basically talking about trends he saw in the formatives suggestions he has moving forward, especially because by the time that we do the formative, we haven't completed the whole content of the of the module. So there are lots of things that we haven't been assessed yet about formatively by the time the summative comes so he really prepared us by giving us sample questions, sample answers, going through problem questions, which are the type of questions we do, with us on the live chat or on the live revision session. So I think that was most helpful.

00:06:14 Jonny Barnes

Yeah, definitely I can see how that would be helpful. So which assessments do you feel that law students are most prepared for? So you mentioned that you do still very similar ones. Which do you think students are most prepared for?

00:06:29 Sama Zou'bi

I think that's really interesting because they're quite different, even though they're both pieces of writing and the only main difference is the fact that you know one is much longer than the other, so the coursework is much longer than the tobas. Also I feel like the structure of the of the coursework demands more kind of extensive research beyond the scope of the content that they that we were given. So even though a lot of people enjoy them and I personally really enjoy going through the research process and sort of digging up into things beyond the content, I feel like studying from the content itself and kind of, limiting yourself to that, even though it's you know extensive content on its own and kind of makes me feel a bit like OK, well, they're not really expecting anything beyond so unless I decide to, you know, go through that endeavor. So it's fine if I stick to the content. So I guess it's a bit more reassuring in that sense, and you feel like because the TOBAs are multiple questions for each module, you feel like you're kind of going through the years worth of content, whereas for the coursework you can really choose a topic. So for example, for one of my modules, I chose a topic that we did for one of the learning cycles as part of the larger module and I, you know, dig deep into researching it, and I felt like I wasn't able to review the rest of the content. But I feel like yeah. It's really personal preference more than anything.

00:08:00 Jonny Barnes

Thank you Sama. So after talking to Chloe and Sama, it's quite clear that students feel more prepared for assessments when they've had the chance to engage within a similar activity.

This resonates with me too in my first year of university I had a module which was assessed through a written parliamentary style debate and I really enjoyed writing it as I think that throughout the seminars we had, each week we had we would undertake small group debates within the class based on the that session's topic area and not only did we get used to the style of a debate, how you structure it, who goes next, so it also helped me become more critical and structure my arguments, which is a really important lesson for a first year to learn.

So if you would like to learn a bit more about other ways that this could work in your discipline, there are some fantastic resources already on the BILT blog by academic developer Emily Poletto Lawson and former student fellow Toby Roberts. If you search on their names on our website [bilt.online](http://bilt.online), you will find some fascinating articles about their approaches to inclusive and formative assessment. And before I sign off for today, I would like to leave you with one takeaway that preparing students for assessment doesn't need to be time consuming. Whilst Sama's lecturer, provided thorough feedback to her, Chloe and I received peer feedback from inside and outside of our presentation and debate groups and so if you're finding formative assessment time-consuming at the moment, try training your students to give feedback themselves by providing them with a clear criterion marking matrix. It may make your students feel more comfortable as well as reducing your own workload.

And do remember to check out those resources by Emily and Toby on our website [bilt.online](http://bilt.online)