

**Title:** **Gonzo Assessments: Balancing the inequality in assessment design**

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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- apply the 'gonzo' model when designing and developing activities that increase student participation in assessment design
- reflect on the potential pitfalls and opportunities when co-creating assessments with students
- discuss the role learning technologies can play when co-creating assessments

### **Session Outline**

Gonzo journalism is characterised by the writer's direct involvement with the events on which they are reporting. Rejecting the standard observer-to-reporter nature of journalism, gonzo journalism seeks to "equalise the footing between observer and observed" (Caron, 1985). Imaging this journalism practice, gonzo assessments seek to readdress the balance of input that the assessment creators and students have over the design of the assessment.

The notion of giving students a more active role in creating their own learning is one that has been gathering pace for a number of years. Emerging from the pedagogical movement towards student-centred learning, approaches such as 'co-creation' (Bovill, 2014), 'students as producers' (Neary, 2010) and 'students as partners' (Healy et al. 2014) have become increasingly used in 21<sup>st</sup> century education as a method of increasing student engagement and enhancing metacognition. Most assessment of student learning is, however, "undertaken with little or no consultation with students" (Stefani, 2006) and if national guidance recommends "students should be offered greater partnership in assessment" (HEA, 2012) then it is this imbalance that gonzo assessments seek to counter. Numerous metrics show that student satisfaction with assessment and feedback is continually marked lower than other aspects of their experience; gonzo assessments seek to involve students far more in the design and creation of their assessment to make them stakeholders in the process.

This workshop will use the outcomes of two small-scale research studies to model an approach that utilises learning technologies in the co-creation of summative assessments.

## Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

Content	Timing	Activity
Introductions	10mins	Speaker-led; Speaker introducing the concept of gonzo assessments and how they could be used to improve student experience.
Choose your module.	5mins	Speaker-led; Participants use student response system (SRS) to choose module.
Design your assessment.	15mins	Participant-led; Participants (in groups) are asked to use the information they have been given about the module to create the assessments for the module. At the end of the activity, participants use the SRS to vote on their favourite assessments from all groups and creation of an assessment brief can begin.
Co-create your assessment	10mins	Participant and speaker-led; participants given the opportunity to use GoogleDocs to ask create the assessment brief with the tutor. Questions can be posed via the SRS.
Feedback on gonzo assessments – thoughts and recommendations.	5mins	Speaker-led; Participants sharing thoughts and ideas of the benefits and drawbacks of using different learning technologies to administer co-created assessments

## References

Bovill, C. (2014). An investigation of co-created curricula within higher education in the UK, Ireland and the USA. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 51(1), pp. 15-25.

Caron, J.E. (1985). *Hunter S. Thompson's "Gonzo" Journalism and the Tall Tale Tradition in America*. *Popular Culture Association in the South*. 8(1), pp. 1-16.

Healey, M., Flint, A. & Harrington, K. (2014). Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education. York: HEA. Available at: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learningand-teaching-higher-education>

Higher Education Academy (HEA). (2012). *A Marked Improvement: Transforming assessment in Higher Education*.

Neary, M. (2010). Student as producer: a pedagogy for the avant-garde; or, how do revolutionary teachers teach? *Learning Exchange*, 1(1).

Stefani, J. (2006). Assessment in Partnership with Learners. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 23(4), pp. 339-350.