

CETL-MSOR Conference 2015

Claire Cornock: Learning within assessment: developing a deeper understanding through group work assessment

Within a final year pure elective based around applications, students undertake a group task on formal languages and automata as part of the assessment. The task is the second of three coursework tasks, which are followed by an exam at the end of the module. Within the group task, the students create their own examples of languages to demonstrate techniques, which include both practical and abstract methods. They are presented with a list of techniques that they need to cover, but otherwise they are given freedom to take their work in any direction they wish. The students work within peer support groups throughout the module in the workshop style taught sessions, so by the time they receive their group task in the second semester they are already used to working in the groups. Activities are carefully designed to encourage peer support throughout the workshops.

Within the task, they look develop a deeper understanding of the materials and are given the freedom to explore connections between the different methods. The same techniques could be applied to given examples, but asking the students to create their own gets them thinking very carefully about when the techniques from the module work well and why. Students report back that the task allows them to understand the material.

Within the session, an outline of the assessment method will be provided. The advantages and disadvantages will be explored, supported by students' comments.