

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

### Implementing an interactive oral task to assess undergraduate psychology students' attainment of pre-professional competencies

**Taneile A. Kitchingman, Genevieve D'Arment**

School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Australia

**Rhianydd Shakeshaft**

Institute of Health & Wellbeing, Psychology, Federation University, Australia

Finding engaging and authentic ways to assess required competencies which are resistant to academic misconduct is a challenge for tertiary psychology education. While simulation-based tasks are commonly used to assess postgraduate students' development of professional competencies, they are less commonly used in undergraduate programs to assess pre-professional competencies. Interactive oral assessments have been suggested to achieve authenticity while inhibiting academic misconduct, and to be feasible within an online learning environment. The current study presents students' and markers' perceptions of an interactive oral task implemented to assess fourth-year psychology students' counselling and reflection skills. Results suggest that students and markers perceived the interactive oral task to be an authentic assessment of knowledge and skills required for future practice, which encouraged deeper learning than written assessments or exams, and was resistant to academic misconduct. Despite feeling anxious about the new assessment format, both students and markers reported finding the engaging nature of the task enjoyable and indicated that they would like to be involved in more interactive oral assessments in the future. The extent to which these findings reflect the current literature, and the role for interactive oral tasks in the innovative, authentic assessment of pre-professional competencies which promote academic integrity are discussed.

*Keywords:* Psychology competencies, authentic assessment, interactive oral, role-play, mixed methods

#### Introduction

Developing and evaluating core competencies is integral to tertiary psychology education (Hakelind & Sundström, 2022). Fourth-year psychology graduates are expected to have advanced knowledge and skills for professional practice (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013). Fourth-year degrees are therefore required to develop students' pre-professional competencies, including reflective learning and counselling microskills (Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency, 2023; Australian Psychology Accreditation Council [APAC], 2019). However, finding engaging, authentic ways to assess these competencies is a challenge.

Traditionally, recorded role-plays and written reflection tasks have been used to assess students' counselling microskills and skills for reflection. However, these approaches lack relevance to professional practice. Inconsistencies between role-played scenarios or differences in how the client role is played can impact the authenticity of these assessments (Oxlad et al., 2022). Role-plays are also susceptible to academic misconduct, as students may engage in contract cheating by employing an expert clinician to coach responses, or edit recordings prior to submission (Bretag et al., 2019). Written reflection tasks are also susceptible to academic misconduct, including the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Taken together, these challenges highlight the need for assessment of psychology students' competencies to evolve, and have led APAC (2019) to highlight the importance of live role-plays and simulations in the assessment of clinical skills.

Real-time assessment of competencies, such as Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) and viva voces, are commonly used in postgraduate clinical psychology programs (Hakelind & Sundström, 2022; Oxlad et al., 2022; Yap et al., 2021). Despite established evidence that these tasks provide reliable, valid, realistic, and fair assessments of clinical knowledge and skills (Roberts et al., 2017; Roberts et al., 2020; Sheen et al., 2015; Sundström & Hakelind, 2022), they are not commonly used in undergraduate courses. Interactive oral

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

assessments are an alternative assessment type involving a real-time interaction between student and examiner based on a scenario or role-play (Scheele et al., 2021). Interactive oral assessments have been shown to offer a more authentic alternative to traditional assessment tasks, while inhibiting misconduct (Sotiriadou et al., 2020; Ward et al., 2023). University academics who have implemented interactive oral assessments within undergraduate courses report this to be an engaging means to rigorously assess students' skills for future employment, which is feasible online (Colvin & Gaffney, 2023). While students report anxiety regarding the novel format of interactive oral assessments, those whose learning is scaffolded with continuous practice in a psychologically safe environment also report feeling prepared for the task (Lim & Lim, 2022; Shaeri et al., 2021; Wake et al., 2024). Despite experiencing some anxiety, students who have participated in interactive oral tasks report appreciating this opportunity to enhance their professional skills and finding this experience valuable for their future employment (Lim et al., 2023; Wake et al., 2024).

Despite the promising findings regarding interactive oral assessments, this is the first known study to report the use of an interactive oral task to assess undergraduate psychology students' attainment of pre-professional competencies. Teaching staff in the School of Psychology at Charles Sturt University implemented an interactive oral task to assess students' counselling microskills and skills for reflection. The aim of the current study was to evaluate students' and markers' perceptions and experiences of this task, and to examine the extent to which these reflect the current literature regarding interactive oral assessments.

### Method

#### Interactive oral task

PSY474 'Counselling Skills' is a compulsory subject delivered online to fourth-year psychology students studying by distance. The subject provides a systematic introduction to the theory and practice of counselling, including ethical, legal, and professional issues related to counselling clients from diverse backgrounds and with different presenting concerns in a range of settings. Subject learning outcomes are aligned with APAC pre-professional competencies, and include the ability to demonstrate basic counselling microskills and the ability to reflect on personal strengths and weaknesses as a counsellor. Previously, these learning outcomes were assessed by submission of a recorded role-play and a written reflection. In 2023, an interactive oral assessment was implemented in place of these tasks. The interactive oral task involved a 10-minute role-played counselling session, followed by a 5-minute self-reflection on this session. The task was marked by two registered psychologists – one playing the role of client according to one of three standardised vignettes, and the other playing the role of supervisor observing the session. Students' preparation was scaffolded by weekly tutorials focusing on role-play skills practice in triads – one student playing the role of 'counsellor', one of 'client' and one of 'observer' – to emulate the assessment environment. Students were also provided with an example recording of the task completed by staff members, and a marked rubric evaluating the performance of the staff member playing the role of counsellor, to demonstrate how the task would run and be marked.

#### Participants

Following the finalisation of grades, all students who completed the subject PS474 'Counselling Skills' in 2023 were invited to participate in an anonymous online survey. On completion of the survey, students were invited to participate in a focus group. Forty-one (34.7%) of 118 eligible students completed the survey. Five of these students opted to participate in a focus group. Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the total student pool, and students who participated in this study. Participants were predominantly mature-aged, female, from English-speaking backgrounds, and enrolled in masters level courses. This was considered a representative sample of enrolled students. Four of six psychologists involved in marking the task who were not a member of the research team were invited to participate in a focus group, and two (50%) opted in.

Table 1

*Demographic characteristics of total student pool and student participants*

	Total pool <sup>a</sup> (n = 139)	Participants <sup>b</sup> (n = 41)
--	-----------------------------------	------------------------------------

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

---

Age		
Mean (SD)	40	42.40(9.56)
Range		23-59
Gender <i>n</i> (%)		
Woman, or female	109(78.4)	31(75.6)
Man, or male		9(22.0)
Prefer not to answer		1(2.4)
Background <i>n</i> (%)		
Non-English speaking		35(85.4)
English-speaking		6(14.6)
Course <i>n</i> (%)		
Master of Psychological Practice	59(42.4)	25(61.0)
Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)(Hons)	29(20.9)	6(14.6)
Bachelor of Psychology (Hons)	24(17.3)	5(12.2)
Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology	18(12.9)	4(9.8)
Bachelor of Psychology	9(6.5)	1(2.4)

---

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>university subject data, <sup>b</sup>self-report online survey data.

### Materials

The online survey created in Qualtrics included a combination of items rated on Likert scales, closed- and open-ended questions. Initial survey items assessed demographic characteristics. Additional items developed by the authors assessed students' experiences and perceptions regarding engagement with subject content, depth of learning, skill development, stress and anxiety, academic integrity and authenticity in relation to the interactive oral task. They were then repeated in relation to written assessment tasks and tests or exams completed previously, for comparison. These items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither disagree or agree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Students were also asked to rate how their experience regarding the work involved, experience and performance in the interactive oral task compared to their expectations on a 5 point Likert scale (1 = *much worse*, 2 = *worse*, 3 = *the same*, 4 = *better*, 5 = *much better*). The survey concluded with three open-ended response items inviting students to comment on any benefits, drawbacks or problems, and final thoughts about the task.

A six-point focus group protocol was developed based on insights from the literature review and online survey responses. The schedule was designed to prompt further discussion of students' and markers' experiences and perceptions of the interactive oral task, including regarding engagement, depth of learning, authenticity, academic integrity, and the most and least beneficial aspects of the assessment.

### Procedure

After receiving institutional ethics approval (protocol H23889), and after students' final grades for the subject were released, an invitation to participate in the online survey was made via the subject learning management system. A link was provided to the participant information sheet and survey. Students provided implicit consent to participate by proceeding to the survey. Two focus groups were conducted with students (40 and 49 minutes), and one with markers (45 minutes). All focus groups were held via Zoom, as this was familiar to participants and provided flexible options for communication via video and chat. Focus groups were facilitated by author G.D., who had no current teaching responsibilities within the subject or institution, providing participants with greater freedom to express their experiences and perceptions. The facilitator worked through the focus group schedule using predetermined prompts where indicated. Participants were offered an opportunity to review transcripts or remove comments, however no requests to do so were made.

### Data analysis

Quantitative survey data was analysed using SPSS (version 29). Recordings of focus groups were transcribed verbatim by author G.D., de-identified and quality checked. Nvivo (version 14) was used for electronic storage

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

and organisation of qualitative data, including open-ended online survey responses and focus group transcripts. Qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis. Authors T.K. and G.D. firstly familiarised themselves with the data by reading the responses and transcripts, and higher order codes. Authors T.K. and G.D. then independently, inductively coded the data. All authors (T.K, G.D. and R.S.) then met to refine the coding framework as a team. Disagreements were identified and resolved via consensus. Compelling extracts were then selected to convey each theme and subtheme.

### Results and discussion

Integrated discussion of qualitative and quantitative results in relation to the literature is presented below.

#### Expectations

On average, students indicated that the work involved in preparing for the interactive oral task ( $M = 3.61, SD = 1.09$ ), the experience ( $M = 3.12, SD = 1.25$ ), and their performance ( $M = 3.29, SD = 1.52$ ) were the same as they expected.

#### Engagement and deep learning

Students rated the interactive oral assessment task as more interesting than written assessments or tests/exams completed in the past (Table 2). In keeping with literature suggesting that students who engage in practical assessments report enhanced engagement in their learning (Sokhanvar et al., 2021), students in the current study also reported feeling more immersed in the subject content in preparation for the interactive oral task than for other assessments completed previously. Students indicated that the interactive oral assessment helped them to understand and remember key concepts, and apply these concepts to real-world situations, more so than written assessments and tests/exams they had previously completed.

Table 2  
*Mean (SD) survey ratings of engagement and deep learning*

	Interactive oral task	Written assessments	Tests/exams
Engagement			
Interesting	4.07(.76)	3.98(.79)	2.93(1.23)
Immersed	4.29(.75)	3.98(.82)	3.39(1.26)
Deep learning			
Understand key concepts	4.17(.83)	4.07(.72)	3.68(1.06)
Remember key concepts	4.05(.84)	3.95(.71)	3.61(1.12)
Apply key concepts	4.15(1.09)	3.46(1.03)	2.61(1.24)

Students who participated in focus groups reported that participating in the interactive oral task helped them to achieve deeper learning than they believed would be possible by submitting a recorded role-play or written task. Students identified regular role-play practice with peers, and engagement in reflection on this practice and the course content in preparation for the interactive oral task, as particular conduits of deep learning.

*I thought about how it was going to affect the person I was working with in a more real sense than if I was writing an essay, because you could see... somebody else was actually engaging with you, and they were actually giving you feedback on what was happening.*

*Having this type of assessment meant that I practiced every chance I got. My ability went from practicing to 'tick a box' to really understanding how and why each skill is used and its effectiveness when used appropriately. I have learnt counselling skills, but what I found really interesting was how my natural personality and how I approach interaction with others has a great influence on the outcome... I felt this task was a huge benefit to me.*

#### Skill development and authenticity

Students rated the interactive oral assessment as more helpful for developing reflection and communication skills than written assessments or tests/exams (Table 3). They indicated that the interactive oral assessment

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

developed their critical thinking skills to a greater extent than tests/exams, but to a slightly lesser extent than written assessments. This is consistent with previous findings that students perceive interactive oral tasks to be more beneficial for their development of analytical and communication skills than problem-solving skills (Colvin & Gaffey, 2023).

Table 3

*Mean (SD) survey ratings of skill development and authenticity*

	Interactive oral task	Written assessments	Tests/exams
Skill development			
Reflection	4.27(.84)	3.80(.78)	3.17(1.32)
Communication	3.95(1.61)	3.44(1.03)	2.37(1.34)
Critical thinking	3.61(1.14)	4.10(.74)	3.17(1.22)
Authenticity	4.07(1.08)	3.66(.88)	3.44(1.14)

Markers reported that the interactive oral task required students to demonstrate key skills for future professional practice. In keeping with previous research suggesting that students who have participated in an interactive task report appreciating the opportunity this provided to enhance their professional skills (Lim & Lim, 2022; Wake et al., 2024), students in the current study reported feeling motivated to develop assessable skills, as they could see the relevance for their future careers. Students felt that they developed particular skills which would be required of them when working in the field, but which would not be developed via other forms of assessment, including the ability to use counselling and reflection skills ‘in the moment’.

*I think it's good to read it in a textbook, but that doesn't necessarily teach you how to do these things. So some of the skills that we learnt... we were able to not just read it in a textbook, we were able to practice it, we were able to see how we would use it, in the future, in our practice, and I felt that that made me understand how sessions would work in the future... and what I would do as a psychologist.*

Results of the current study were also consistent with previous research indicating that interactive oral assessments offer a more authentic alternative to traditional assessment tasks (Sotiriadou et al., 2020). Students rated the interactive oral assessment task as a better measure of knowledge and skills required in their future profession than written assessments or tests/exams (Table 3). Students reported that the task gave them a sense of what a real counselling session might be like, and markers felt the task was as authentic as possible prior to commencing placements at the post-graduate level.

*It's the closest you can get to sitting in front of a real client... So it's nice to have that experience beforehand... because when you do end up in front of a real client, you've already had those initial kind of nerves and all those things you feel the first time you have to demonstrate your counselling skills in front of somebody else. It does relate so closely to what they'll do if they choose to be a psychologist or counsellor.*

A marker who had marked the previous recorded role-play equivalent of the task felt the interactive oral task improved the ability to detect rapport, and students taking a scripted approach.

*You could actually mark rapport this way. Whereas with the videos, I never really understood, how do you mark rapport? Because you're watching two people that usually had a relationship and it was scripted most of the time. And then it's like I didn't understand, it was really hard to mark rapport but with this way you do. You could feel the rapport because you were the client... So I think that was a strength.*

*You could pick up on people who had... overly prepared and had a script, because... they wouldn't be responding to the question you were asking, so it was reflected in their marks. Whereas in the past with a recording, it's really hard to determine those sorts of you know – Is this genuine? How much is set up? Is it all scripted?*

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

Markers noted that some students' performances were impacted by nerves, however felt that this increased the authenticity of the task, as some stress or anxiety regarding performance was normal for psychologists.

*I think it was authentic, not just because they're actually... doing real counselling instead of writing about it, or doing a videotape and being able to re-videotape it all the time, but it was sort of authentic because they got nervous and wondered if they were going to do a good job, which is what a psychologist would actually do.*

Some students felt that the authenticity of the task was limited by the necessity to demonstrate the skills required within a short timeframe, as focusing on this impacted their ability to attend to the client. Others felt that it was a requirement for professional practice to learn how to manage these competing demands.

Most students felt that requirement to perform the skills live and adapt their approach in the moment made the task more authentic. A number of students stated they would have edited or re-recorded their submission of a recorded role-play to achieve the highest possible mark.

*As nerve racking as it was to do it live, I'm not sure that I would have wanted to do a recording, because I think that I would have constantly been second guessing that and changing it, whereas when you do it live you just have to do it. You have to go with the flow. You have to think on your feet. And I, yeah, I thought that was better than most assessments that I've done.*

A smaller number of students reported that nerves impacted their performance during the live task, and they felt a recorded role-play would have provided a truer reflection of their knowledge and skills.

*A person's mark is dependent on performance on the day, which means that nerves can lead to errors that you would not ordinarily make, so not a true reflection of one's knowledge and skill. I think that doing a video recording of a client therapist session would be better and truer sense of someone's skills in that they would be able to submit good session.*

### Academic integrity

In relation to academic integrity, on average students strongly disagreed that it would be easy to cheat in an interactive oral assessment, and disagreed that it would be easy to cheat in written assessments or tests/exams (Table 4). As a group, they strongly disagreed that they would consider cheating in all forms of assessment. Both students and markers who participated in focus groups suggested the live nature of the interactive oral task made this more resistant to academic misconduct than written assignments or a recorded role-play submission. Taken together, these results are consistent with previous research suggesting that students who engage in practical assessments including interactive oral tasks are less likely to engage in academic misconduct, including cheating (Bretag et al., 2019; Sotiriadou et al., 2020)

Table 4

*Mean (SD) survey ratings of academic integrity*

	Interactive oral task	Written assessments	Tests/exams
Easy to cheat	1.37(.62)	2.83(1.32)	2.44(1.27)
Consider cheating	1.24(.80)	1.20(.40)	1.34(.73)

Both students and markers agreed that it remained possible to cheat during the interactive task, including by using an earpiece to receive expert coaching. However, both felt that there would be signs of this, and it could be detrimental to the student's performance.

*The only thing I thought of, and the chances of this working are very low, but... if someone had like an earpiece in, you know (laughter) and so there was someone else in the room who was listening in... but that would be much more trouble than it's worth. And yeah, there'd be pauses and the person would look to middle distance, you know?*

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

Students also noted the availability of AI software which would emulate eye contact while the user refers to notes, however also felt this would be obvious to markers.

*I wondered about, because eye contact is such a big deal, you can get software that... makes your eyes track to the camera. And so I could be reading notes and looking at the camera. I decided you'd probably look pretty strange if you did it, and it wouldn't be a good thing to do either*

Some students reported feeling unclear on whether using a question or phrase they had observed a peer use effectively in a practice role-play during their own assessment constituted academic misconduct but felt this would not be uncommon in professional practice. Markers also suspected that some students referred to notes on their computer screen during the assessment, however did not believe this to be an academic integrity issue, as they felt it was acceptable for psychologists to refer to notes during session.

### Stress, anxiety and confidence

Students reported similar stress, but higher anxiety and lower confidence to complete the interactive oral assessment than written assessments or exams (Table 4).

Table 4

*Mean (SD) survey ratings of anxiety, stress and confidence*

	Interactive oral task	Written assessments	Tests/exams
Anxious	4.07(.99)	3.02(1.24)	3.73(1.16)
Stressed	3.10(1.24)	3.20(1.08)	3.44(1.10)
Confident	2.85(1.26)	3.83(1.09)	3.34(1.22)

Students who participated in focus groups described anticipatory anxiety about the task, which they attributed to the unfamiliar format, and the requirement to adapt their demonstration of skills to the particular client presentation in the moment, rather than implementing pre-prepared responses. This prompted greater engagement with the subject content.

*I guess I felt super anxious about the many different ways that I felt the assessment could go, depending on the, you know, the problem that the person presented with and who they were, and whether you clicked with the pretend client, and all that sort of thing... I felt that the only way to overcome that was to really, really engage with the subject, and I think for that reason I was more engaged than ever.*

Students also identified the weighting of the task, the number of skills they were required to demonstrate within the timeframe, and the presence of two staff members, as factors which increased pressure and stress. They suggested that engaging in two interactive oral tasks of lower weighting, and having a second marker who was unfamiliar to them, may have decreased stress.

*For some people it's the first time that they've actually done anything like that. They've spent the last however many years doing the undergrad and, you know, might not necessarily have any practical work experience in this field. And so for that to be the first thing that they were doing and having it, you know, worth so many marks, I think if there were two then you sort of build up to it a little bit more and get your confidence, and learn what you're actually supposed to be doing.*

Markers agreed that two interactive oral tasks, the first being lower stakes, may have supported students to perform to the best of their ability, however acknowledged that this was unlikely to be feasible due to the increased resources required.

Some students, including those who experienced technical issues, reported experiencing a high level of anxiety on initial presentation for the assessment. Most of these students reported that they were supported by staff and successfully able to reduce their anxiety prior to the task beginning. A small number of students felt that

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

their anxiety persisted and negatively impacted their performance. Students who experienced more moderate levels of anxiety reported that this experience was beneficial and increased their confidence.

*Although I did not enjoy the experience and felt incredibly anxious about it... there is no doubt that it was beneficial in building the skills required to be a counselling psychologist. There is no way around it, the only way to get better is to be immersed in it, so I appreciate that, no matter how uncomfortable it felt.*

A number of students expressed feeling confident to engage in the assessment. These students reported feeling clear on what was required, and well prepared for the task as their development of the required skills was scaffolded, particularly by the practice in weekly tutorials and example recording.

*I felt that we were really quite well prepared for it, because we had done those tutorials every week, and we got to go to the breakout rooms and practice with other students... Then we got to see Rhi and Taneile do a demonstration for us. So I felt like we had lots of good preparation to kind of, you know stop us being so scared about it, but also just to prepare us for actually doing it.*

*How it was scaffolded from the beginning of the unit through the breakout rooms and the content was amazing. By the time we got to the interactive assessment, all the pieces were in place, I'd practiced each component, and I knew what I was doing.*

Taken together, these findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that students will be anxious about completing a novel task such as an interactive oral assessment (Lim & Lim, 2022; Oxlad et al., 2022; Wake et al., 2024), however supporting students' preparation for the task by scaffolding learning with continuous practice can reduce anxiety and help students feel more confident to complete the task (Lim & Lim, 2022; Shaeri et al., 2021; Wake et al., 2024).

### Enjoyment

As a group, students enjoyed the interactive oral task more than sitting tests/exams, but less than completing written assessments (Table 4). Almost two-thirds of students agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the task ( $N = 27$ , 65.9%), and the majority also agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to complete an interactive oral task again in the future ( $N = 24$ , 58.6%).

Table 4

*Mean (SD) survey ratings of enjoyment*

	Interactive oral task	Written assessments	Tests/exams
Enjoyed	3.37(1.26)	3.73(.87)	3.15(1.33)
Would like to complete again	3.41(1.32)	3.78(.99)	3.17(1.18)

Students who participated in focus groups also spoke about finding the interactive oral task more enjoyable to complete than written assessment tasks. Similarly to previous research (Oxlad et al., 2022), students particularly enjoyed the practical nature of the task, and the opportunity to practice skills before commencing work with real clients on placement.

*To be able to practice that where you know, you're not out on placement, you're not dealing with a real person, you're not gonna wreck anyone if you do the wrong thing. I would appreciate more of it.*

Many students who participated in focus groups identified the engagement with fellow students and peer to peer learning which occurred in preparation for the task as a highlight of their experience. They enjoyed working more closely with their peers and getting to know them on a more personal level than in previous subjects. They also spoke about receiving helpful feedback, validation and support from their fellow students. A number of students reported having found this difficult to achieve previously due to studying online.



# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

*I think online study always makes it very difficult to make friends and have a community of people that are going through the same kind of things or have similar questions to you. So that was like the best thing, I think, that came out of the whole assessment, and of the course so far, just having more connections with people and having that group... It was a really organic way to build connections.*

A smaller proportion of students reported finding peer-to-peer learning less enjoyable, as this caused them to feel anxious or engage in unhelpful comparisons with their peers' performance.

Markers who participated in focus groups reported finding the interactive oral task more enjoyable to mark than other assessments. One marker stated that they no longer accept contracts to mark written assignments, although would like to mark interactive oral assessments again, and believed the opportunity to mark such practical tasks may assist with retention of psychologists as casual markers.

*You feel part of an actual team. So I think it would probably mean that people would be more open to marking and you could even, I guess, build on that to have more consistent markers. Because I think there's probably people... especially psychologists that don't want to read, you know, essay after essay, but when you bring in those practical skills that they use day to day, they would probably be more open to marking in that way.*

In keeping with previous findings (Ward et al., 2023), both markers highlighted engagement with students and other staff as a particularly enjoyable aspect of their involvement in the assessment. They felt marking the task involved less preparation and was more efficient than marking written assessments. One marker who lives with vision impairment also expressed that the interactive oral was a very accessible task to participate in marking. In the context of the tertiary education sector's increased reliance on them, these findings suggest that the nature of interactive oral marking may address sessional markers' sense of disconnection from the institution, and need for camaraderie and fellowship (Hammond et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that interactive oral tasks provide a means to authentically assess fourth-year psychology students' required pre-professional competencies in a manner which strengthens academic integrity and prepares students for their future profession. Despite experiencing some anxiety regarding the unfamiliar assessment format, both students' and markers' experiences and perceptions of the task were generally positive. Students reported greater engagement in subject content, deeper learning than in preparation for traditional assessment tasks, and most reported they would like to engage in further interactive oral assessments. Markers enjoyed engaging with students and collaborating with colleagues, and indicated willingness to be involved in marking interactive oral tasks in the future. Due to the small number of students and markers who participated in this study from one fourth-year psychology subject at a regional university, the results of this study may not be generalisable. However, they offer insights into how interactive oral tasks may be used to authentically and rigorously assess psychology students' development of competencies and prepare them for their future profession, in a way many also find enjoyable.

## References

- Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (2023). Professional competencies for psychologists. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD23%2F32537&dbid=AP&checksum=nr m1%2FMn4vf6%2Bfx7poWRgew%3D%3D>
- Australian Psychology Accreditation Council. (2019). *Accreditation standards for psychology programs: Evidence guide*. [https://apac.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/APAC-Evidence-guide\\_v1.2.pdf](https://apac.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/APAC-Evidence-guide_v1.2.pdf)
- Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2013). *Australian Qualifications Framework* (2nd Edition). <https://www.aqf.edu.au/framework/australian-qualifications-framework>
- Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., van Haeringen, K., Saddiqui, S., & Rozenberg, P. (2019). Contract cheating and assessment design: Exploring the relationship. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(5), 676–691. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1527892>

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

- Colvin, E., & Gaffey, J. (2023). Implementing interactive oral assessment in criminal justice subjects: Reporting on student experiences of novel assessment items. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2023.2200465>
- Hammond, K. M., Rai, M., Hassouna, A., & Raleigh, S. (2023). "Appreciate we are individual humans with previous experience": An exploration of sessional marker experiences. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 20(6). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.6.8>
- Hakelind, C., & Sundström, A. E. (2022). Examining skills and abilities during the pandemic – Psychology students' and examiners' perceptions of a digital OSCE. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 21(3), 278–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14757257221114038>
- Lim, S. M, Chua, E. C-P., Avnit, K., & Wang, P. C. (2023). Promoting online authentic continuous assessments. In M. So-Sum Wai-Cook et al. (Eds), *Online Teaching and Learning in Asian Higher Education* (pp. 147–162). Springer Nature. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38129-4\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38129-4_8)
- Lim, S. M, & Lim, C. Y. (2022). Use of interactive oral assessment to increase workplace readiness of occupational therapy students. *The Asia Pacific Scholar*, 8(2), 86–88. <https://doi.org/10.29060/TAPS.2023-8-2/SC2804>
- Oxlad, M., D'Annunzio, J., Sawyer, A., & Paparo, J. (2022). Postgraduate students' perceptions of simulation-based learning in professional psychology training. *Australian Psychologist*, 57(4), 226–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050067.2022.2073807>
- Roberts, R., Chur-Hansen, A., Winefield, H., Patten, S., Ward, H., & Dorstyn, D. (2017). Using OSCEs with simulation to maximise student learning and assess competencies in psychology: A pilot study. *Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-Professional Journal*, 18(2), 61. <https://doi.org/10.11157/fohpe.v18i2.140>
- Roberts, R. M., Oxlad, M., Dorstyn, D., & Chur-Hansen, A. (2020, January 10). Objective structured clinical examinations with simulated patients in postgraduate psychology training: Student perceptions. *Australian Psychologist*, 55 (5), 488–497. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12457>
- Scheele, D., Krautloher, A., Shaeri, S., Craig, M-L., & Crawford, R. (2021). The value of a community of practice in the subject design process when embedding interactive oral assessments. In Gregory, S., Warburton, s., & Schier, M. (Eds.), *Back to the Future – ASCILITE '21. Proceedings ASCILITE 2021 in Armidale*, 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ascilite2021.0113>
- Shaeri, S., Logan, D., & Krautloher, A. (2021). Evaluating competency developments using interactive oral assessments. In *REES AAEE 2021 conference: Engineering Education Research Capability Development* (pp. 103–112). Perth, WA: Engineers Australia. <https://doi.org/10.52202/066488-0114>
- Sheen, J., MCGillivray, J., Gurtman, C., & Boyd, L. (2015). Assessing the clinical competence of psychology students through objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs): Student and staff views. *Australian Psychologist*, 50(1), 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12086>
- Sokhanvar, Z., Salehi, K., & Sokhanvar, F. (2021). Advantages of authentic assessment for improving the learning experience and employability skills of higher education students: A systematic literature review. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2021.101030>
- Sotiriadou, P., Logan, D., Daly, A., Guest, R. (2020). The role of authentic assessment to reserve academic integrity and promote skill development and employability. *Studies in Higer Education*, 45(11), 2132–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1582015>
- Sundström, A., & Hakelind, C. (2022). Examining clinical skills and abilities in psychology – implementation and evaluation of an objective structured clinical examination in psychology. *The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice*, 18(2), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMHTEP-10-2021-0124>
- Wake, S., Pownall, M., Harris, R., & Birtill, P. (2024). Balancing pedagogical innovation with psychological safety? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higer Education*, 49(4), 511–522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2275519>
- Ward, M., O'Riordan, F., Logan-Fleming, D., Cooke, D., Concannon-Gibney, T., Efthymiou, M., & Watkins, N. (2023). Interactive oral assessment case studies: An innovative, academically rigorous, authentic assessment approach. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2251967>
- Yap, K., Sheen, J., Nedeljkovic, M., Milne, L., Lawrence, K., & Hay, M. (2021). Assessing clinical competencies using the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) in psychology training. *Clinical Psychologist*, 25(3), 11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13284207.2021.1932452>

# ASCILITE 2024

## Navigating the Terrain:

*Emerging Frontiers in Learning Spaces, Pedagogies, and Technologies*

Kitchingman, T., D'Arment, G., & Shakeshaft, R. (2024). Heutagogy-based Human-AI Co-creation Practice: A Conceptual Framework for Enhancing Undergraduate Creativity. In Cochrane, T., Narayan, V., Bone, E., Deneen, C., Saligari, M., Tregloan, K., Vanderburg, R. (Eds.), *Navigating the Terrain: Emerging frontiers in learning spaces, pedagogies, and technologies*. Proceedings ASCILITE 2024. Melbourne (pp. 34-44).  
<https://doi.org/10.14742/apubs.2024.1087>

Note: All published papers are refereed, having undergone a double-blind peer-review process. The author(s) assign a Creative Commons by attribution license enabling others to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon their work, even commercially, as long as credit is given to the author(s) for the original creation.

© Kitchingman, T., D'Arment, G., & Shakeshaft, R. 2024