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Assessment practices must reinforce the stated aims of a course; otherwise every lofty aim of teaching is rendered null and void. Students learn very quickly which tasks get credit, and these are usually the passing of factual tests. Students are comfortable with familiar multiple choice questions and short answer questions and generally do not wish to be extended beyond this mode. An aphorism is that the only group more conservative than teachers is their students; however, a good course is not necessarily one that is comfortable. An extensive revision of the content of the medical course at my university took 2 years and involved over a 100 members of faculty. The great day came when the new course began, and it was a grand occasion with senior professors telling the audience how much planning had gone into the new course. The planning was entirely for content, although I had niggled the planners about assessment. I had an "I told you so" moment when the first questions from the new students were "what will be in the exams and can we see past papers?". There was no answer to be given and exams were eventually set in the way they always had been. "Enhancing assessment in the biological sciences" is the title of an extensive and well-funded project performed in Australia to develop assessment resources for disciplines including zoology, botany, anatomy, biochemistry, environmental science, genetics, and developmental biology [1]. To get to a specific topic of interest such as biochemistry or online assessment, the query box at the web site provides an express route. The collaborators on this project are known to me as committed teachers, mostly of large first-year groups, and professional education research academics. The project began with interviews, roundtable discussions, and national seminars to allow staff and students to describe their experiences with assessment. Examples of innovation and effective assessment strategies were seen to be an outcome of reflection on assessment practices. The survey concluded that assessment serves multiple purposes in higher education and that no single type of assessment will adequately serve all purposes. The particular strengths of each assessment type is summarized by the project authors. Eleven categories of assessment were identified and further aggregated into three groupings. (1) Assessment that targets discipline-specific practice including presentations, research projects, and practical assessment. (2) Assessment of collaborative learning including group work assessed for participation and contributions plus peer and self-assessment. (3) Traditional assessments including examinations, tests and quizzes, written assignments and online assessment. The core information is available for download as a substantial 52-page document that needs printing and annotation. The roles of assessment are succinctly summarized as (1) assigning a ranking, (2) encouraging honest student work, free of plagiarism, (3) encouraging whole of course learning, and (4) providing for time and cost-effective administration. A useful suggestion for online quizzes is to use textbook-provided CD ROMs as a source of material for formative assessment. Guidelines for using multimedia include that it should be engaging, appropriate, high-quality, and integrated with the course. There is a lot that is obvious here and a lot more that many of us should review to formulate better course structures and assessment approaches. While content is the easy part

of reviewing a course, assessment is often the more deserving of attention.

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