



# SoTL

## Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

## Using Assessed Blogs to Improve Student Engagement

### What is this Research About?

The assessments used in a course influence the way students learn and engage with class content. Certain assessments require students to participate actively in learning, thereby increasing their engagement with the course material. Blogging can be used as a form of written assessment that is usually designed with fewer restrictions than essays and written exams, to foster creativity. This research investigated how assessed blogs can be used to enhance student engagement through case studies of four courses that used assessed blogs.

### What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers selected four undergraduate courses that varied in subjects and included graded blogs in their assessments. The courses used various blogging platforms including WordPress and LEARN. The blogs requirements also varied between courses (i.e., group versus individual entries; private versus public blogs). From these four courses, the researchers interviewed the course instructors and conducted four focus groups which included sixteen students in total. The students described their overall experience with blogs including perceived advantages and disadvantages of being graded on them.

### What did the Researchers Find?

The researchers found that blogging was an effective method of increasing student engagement, in all four undergraduate courses, for three main reasons. First, the continuous nature of the blog assessments provided students with the opportunity to reflect on course material regularly throughout the semester. Second, the blog post requirements were less restrictive than typical written assignments, leaving more room for informal discussion, creativity, and reflection on the students' personal lives. Lastly, the challenges of adjusting to this new type of assessment style motivated the students to stay up to speed with course material.

### ➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Instructors could implement written blog entries as a series of assessments throughout the semester. Research shows that assessed blogs are effective in keeping students engaged when there is room for flexibility in the topics they write about. The informal nature of blogs also helps to keep students interested as they may find it easier to express creativity and personal reflections than in other written assessments. Instructors may consider supplementing conventional written assignments with assessed blogs to boost student engagement in their courses.

### ➔ Citation

Christie, H., & Morris, N. (2019). Using assessed blogs to enhance student engagement. *Teaching in Higher Education*. doi:10.1080/13562517.2019.1662390

### ➔ Keywords

student engagement  
student learning

assessment  
blogging



OFFICE of  
TEACHING AND LEARNING