



## **From Anxiety to Readiness: Designing Competence-Based Practical Assessments for Large Level 4 Sport Science Cohorts.**

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### **Abstract**

Assessing practical competencies in large undergraduate cohorts is rarely straightforward. At Level 4, students are often entering laboratory environments for the first time, and being assessed live can heighten anxiety and reduce confidence. Competency-based approaches that emphasise preparation and formative learning can improve students' confidence and readiness for assessment (Alt, 2023). At scale, the need to manage time, space, and resources can lead to highly standardised assessment processes, where the focus shifts towards efficiency and consistency, sometimes at the expense of deeper student engagement and understanding.

This presentation shares the design and delivery of a competency-based assessment model within a core Level 4 sport science module spanning multiple disciplines. The approach was shaped around three priorities: preparing students effectively for assessment, maintaining fairness across a large cohort, and preserving the applied nature of sport science practice through authentic laboratory-based tasks (Bradley et al., 2022; Wiggins, 1990).

Preparation is supported through structured materials that guide students step-by-step towards their practical demonstration. During the assessment, students rotate through the roles of demonstrator and participant, encouraging active involvement and peer interaction while developing a deeper understanding of the practical procedures. Assessment protocol allocations are released 24 hours in advance to promote the development of competence rather than memorisation, reflecting principles of authentic assessment (Gulikers et al., 2004)

The organisation of the assessment relies on close collaboration with technical staff, whose role is central in managing equipment, space, and timing, ensuring the process runs smoothly and consistently across all groups. Inclusive adaptations, including the use of simulated procedures where required, are embedded to support equitable participation.

In practice, this approach has supported students to feel more prepared and engaged, with greater confidence in performing under assessment conditions. The session reflects on how thoughtful assessment design, collaboration, and inclusive practices can support meaningful learning within large-scale practical assessment.

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## Keywords

competency-based assessment, authentic assessment, curriculum design, student confidence, sport science education

## References

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