

Japanese University Students' Pre-Departure Questions about Assessment Overseas

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Abstract

As part of their preparation to participate in study abroad exchange programs, all students in the Department of Global Innovation Studies (GINOS) take a required 'English for Study Abroad' (ESA) class. The class utilizes a textbook in the Palgrave Study Skills series titled "Studying in English (second edition): Strategies for Success in Higher Education" by Reinders, Lewis and Phung (2017). Chapter 11 of the textbook deals with the topic of assessment, something many students are concerned about. During class lectures we covered the types of assessment that they may encounter, checked that they understood the different assessment criteria for the courses they were interested in taking, how to use feedback to increase their learning, how to approach and deal with examinations and the time pressure involved, and what to expect with portfolio assessments. After reading the chapter and discussing its contents, each student wrote a paragraph summarizing their understanding of the main points, a paragraph explaining how they can apply the information in the chapter to their own studies, and at least two questions that they still had about the contents of the chapter and assessment while studying overseas. The purpose of this paper is to collate questions that students have about assessment overseas, so that the GINOS program instructors can better help them prepare for a successful study abroad exchange experience. This paper will discuss assessment methods, explain how the GINOS ESA course helped prepare students for common assessment modes overseas, before focusing on questions second year students had about assessment prior to starting their year abroad.

Introduction

Assessment in higher education is a complex subject, causing stress for students and educators alike. There are many complaints about assessment, yet little has changed in how learning is measured, and as Elton & Johnston (2002) say, "even the best of current practices are by and large not good practice" (p. 96).

In the USA, Brookhart (1991) has described assessment as a "hodgepodge grade of attitude,

effort and achievement" (p. 36), a conclusion echoed by Cross and Frary (1999). DeLuca et al. (2016) also note significant variability in teachers' approaches to assessment. This has led Sambell & McDowell (1998) to conclude that "the quest for a 'perfect' system of assessment is, in one sense, 'doomed from the outset'" (p. 401).

There is great difficulty when trying to correlate assessment methods between subjects and institutions, let alone those in different countries. Hopfenbeck (2020) has noted upon the relatively little research into grading within universities. However, Lipnevich et al. (2020) examined the syllabi of various courses at 250 universities and colleges in the USA to investigate the grading practices. They found that there is great variation, and the reason is that assessment criteria are considered part of the academic freedom of the instructors.

Sambell, McDowell & Brown (1997) indicate that multiple choice and essay examinations are the most common type of assessment, but that new assessment methods (portfolios, self and peer assessment, simulations, case-based evaluation, presentations and other innovative approaches) have expanded in use in recent decades. Alquraan (2014) conducted a cross-cultural study into students' perceptions of assessment practices in students at a university in Jordan and at another in the USA (total 506 students). This study also found that traditional written paper tests are the most common assessment method.

Assessment is a defining aspect of students' approaches to learning, as prior experiences with assessment methods determines future approaches towards them (Marton & Säljö, 1997; Ramsden, 1997). Struyven, Dochy & Janssens (2005) conducted a search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), the Web of Science, and PsychINFO websites, for publications between 1980 and 2002, using the keyword terms 'student perception', 'assessment' and 'higher education' which identified 36 empirical studies of both qualitative and quantitative investigations. They concluded that student behavior is determined by the evaluation and assessment methods used as well as the students' perceptions of those methods, which can significantly influence their approaches to learning and studying. Similar findings were published in Entwistle (1991). The connection between assessment modes and student performance is so synergistic that Brown et al. (1997) go so far as to say "If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment" (p. 9).

This brief summary of research into the intricacies and discussions around assessment in higher education shows the complexity of the subject, and highlights the variety of modes utilized within different institutions and disciplines. Assessment is as much a concern for students as it is for educators. It was deemed of importance to prepare GINOS students for the range of assessment practices they may encounter overseas, and to address any questions about this that they might have.

Method and Analysis

'English for Study Abroad' is a required English for Specific Purposes (ESA) course for GINOS second year students. To participate in an exchange program, the students must obtain a minimum score of 5.5 on the IELTS test or 550 on the TOEFL test. The destinations of the students are mostly Europe and North America, and the typical duration is two semesters. The ESA course lasted one semester (15 lessons), and covered a range of topics to prepare them for life and study overseas, such as academic English skills, listening to lectures, writing essays, participating in tutorials and discussions, communicating with lecturers, dealing with problems, life beyond the classroom, and the focus of this paper, assessment at universities overseas.

There were 60 students in the class, and a total of 46 unique, relevant and insightful questions were collected. From these 46 questions, five themes were identified: questions about different assessment methods, examination procedures, grading methods, dealing with instructor feedback, and questions about portfolio assessment (Table 1). The questions are presented as written by the students, followed by the responses I provided.

Table 1 Themes and sub-themes identified in student questions about assessment overseas

Themes	Sub-Themes
Theme 1: Assessment Methods	1.1 Methods and Criteria 1.2 Questions about Cultural Assessment Preferences 1.3 Questions Related to Assessment Changes due to COVID-19
Theme 2: Examinations	2.1 Practicalities 2.2 Revision 2.3 Exam-taking strategies
Theme 3: Grading Criteria	3.1 Grading Method Comparisons 3.2 Time Spent Grading 3.3 Disputing Grades
Theme 4: Instructor Feedback	4.1 Approaching Instructor Feedback 4.2 Protocol for Instructor Interaction
Theme 5: Portfolio Assessments	5.1 Clarifying Portfolio Assessment 5.2 Excelling at Portfolio Assessment

Theme 1: Assessment Methods

This was the second largest theme identified, but has been listed first due to its broad and overarching nature. Students wanted clarification on the different methods used and an explanation about why there were so many complicated criteria. There were also questions about cultural preferences for assessment methods, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on assessment.

1.1 Methods and Criteria

Why are there some types of methods in assessment?

Different educational theories and teaching approaches support different assessment styles. Teachers have different preferences (for example, reading and grading an essay takes longer than listening to a presentation). Different subjects require different assessment methods (e.g. assessing practical skills like web design with a written examination like an essay makes little sense).

Why do universities set complicated rules of assessing?

Universities do not set the rules, except to decide the boundaries between each grade (e.g. 90-100% = S, 80-89% = A etc). Teachers have autonomy in their own classrooms and can decide how to grade their own students. This is important because each teacher teaches a different subject, and has a different teaching style or methodology. It is very difficult to have a standardized grading system that can be applied to all classes. How could you grade Art class and Mathematics using the same criteria? French and Physics? It is not possible, and as a result there is great variety in grading criteria. There are also philosophical questions such as should we grade for effort (this student tried really hard even though they still do not understand this important aspect of the course - pass or fail them?) or grade for mastery only (this student grew up in the US and speaks English fluently but didn't do any of the homework or attend any classes but still scored well in the final English grammar exam - pass or fail them?), or on development (this student increased their TOEFL score from 300-600, but this student increased from 580-630 - who did "better" and developed more?). There are different opinions on how to deal with these kinds of cases, which also makes it difficult for a standardized assessment criteria to be made. Finally, there is student preference to keep in mind (since universities are increasingly run as businesses with student satisfaction as a metric of "success" that is used for marketing purposes to attract more students) - some students like exams, others don't, so courses are offered to accommodate each preference.

Which is most common: tests, essays or presentations?

This varies between school, subject, class and teacher. Science subjects will possibly have more tests, humanities may have more project work etc. Read the syllabus to help decide which course suits your learning style. I can tell you that I studied science and never had an assessed presentation. Every class had a final exam that lasted at least 3 hours. Almost all exams had at least one essay to write. Most classes had some assessed project work like a research paper or field report. It was usually 50% exam, 50% report for my classes.

1.2 Questions about Cultural Assessment Preferences

Does the type of assessment have any relation with culture?

It is more related to the subject being studied. Arts courses (e.g. Web design) will probably have more portfolio assessment, whereas the sciences or humanities subjects are going to have more final exams, as a general rule.

What are the differences between American education and Japanese one?

You are expected to infer/discuss/argue/decide the best answer more in the US than in Japan. It is possible to fail in the US (a large number of students that start university do not complete it in the US, whereas it is almost guaranteed that you will graduate in Japan). In the US, students are treated like independent free thinking adults at university, whereas in Japan the first year is quite similar to high school in many ways (taking attendance, frequently reminding students of homework deadlines, etc).

In European countries, what is the most major method of assessment generally?

Exams or portfolio assessment. It depends on the subject you are studying and the school/course/teacher. Arts courses (e.g. Web design) will probably have more portfolio assessment, whereas the sciences or humanities subjects are going to have more final exams, as a general rule.

Which kinds of assessment do you like the best?

As a teacher (to assign) or as a student (to do)? I liked doing reports because I could spend a long time understanding something. I am good at writing under pressure so excelled at exams. My favorite assessment was for a class on petroleum exploration (finding oil and gas). It was a 6 hour exam, 3 hours in the morning, 1 hour silent lunch break in the exam room, 3 hours in the afternoon. We were provided with a stack of documents about 2cm high and some large maps and other documents, and by the end of the 6 hours we should have decided where to drill for oil and justified the decision in a report. It was tough but a very interesting experience.

In GINOS, many courses make students give a presentation to assess but this book only introduces exams, reports, and portfolios as objects for assessment. Is there a presentation assessment when I go to study abroad? If I have it, which point should I pay attention to?

It is highly unlikely that a course will be purely graded on presentations. You will most likely be asked to prepare a presentation as part of your tutorial as a way of starting off a discussion. Those presentations may constitute a small fraction of your final grade but the majority of your points will come from reports, portfolio work or exams, I would expect.

1.3 Questions Related to Assessment Changes due to COVID-19

Is there a possibility of changes in assessment methods because of COVID-19?

It is possible. A course with a field trip component may no longer be able to do the trip, for example, so assessment criteria may be changed for that. I would expect any changes to assessment to be clearly indicated on the online syllabus or by the teacher in the first class.

Was it common to do online discussion before the spread of coronavirus? I have never heard of it.

Yes, this is quite common. I took a course a few years ago that had an online forum that students were expected to contribute to each week, which was assessed. Even high school students sometimes do this. It is even quite common for a chat thread to be happening during a lecture, sometimes called a “backchannel”.

Theme 2: Examinations

The next theme, examinations, was by far the largest identified, suggesting trepidation regarding the potential for courses overseas being assessed by examination. Within this theme several topics were identified: examination practicalities, ways to approach revision, and questions about procedures and exam-taking strategies.

2.1 Practicalities

In my mind, Japanese universities tend to use exams to assess the students. How about other countries? Especially the UK and the US.

When I was studying in the UK, all of my classes had final exams that lasted between 3 and 6 hours in length (usually 3 hours). Almost every exam had at least one, and up to three essays to be written in the 3 hours, and of course the questions were never known in advance (but you could predict the topics that were likely to feature and revise accordingly). I never had a class that had an assessed presentation, but I was studying science so that may have been part of the reason.

Will the exam levels get way harder when studying abroad?

Maybe. It depends on the school and the courses you take. You are likely to have more short and long answer written response questions rather than multiple choice or fill in the missing words type questions. Plus you have the language component to factor in.

Is it usual to ask for a longer time for the exam when we are an international students?

I have never heard of that. You can request time extensions for disabilities but as an

international student you have been accepted based on an understanding that you fulfill the minimum language requirements of the school. It would be strange to then say your language skills are not good so you need more time. If you can prove that you have dyslexia or something like that then you will be able to get a time extension.

Can I ask if I have a word I don't understand during the exam in the second language?

Do you mean can you ask the staff member overseeing the exam? You can try, but the staff member is under no obligation to help you, and may have been instructed specifically not to. It will depend on the institution. You should not expect that to be an option. If you don't know the word you are going to have to do your best to guess what the question means and answer it to the best of your abilities. Of course, if your guess is wrong and you do not answer the intended question you will fail.

If I misunderstand the question and write the essay but the content is coherent and well written, how would my grade be affected?

You would get a low grade. You can write the most eloquent and perfect essay about roses but if the question is about frogs you will fail. That is why it is important that you learn the meanings of the essay question words like analyze, define, discuss, criticize, etc.

2.2 Revision

What does revision mean in this chapter? Does it mean doing something again and fixing our knowledge?

Revision means to refresh your memory of things previously studied. During revision you should not be learning new things but reminding yourself of what you already studied.

Is it effective to tackle past questions when I am studying for the test?

For sure. You should be able to see patterns of the types of topics that are likely to come up in the test, and the kinds of questions and the length of response that will be required. My teachers at university supplied us with past exam papers as the exams were approaching.

What does "exams—questions known" mean? (This is written in the textbook as one type of assessment.)

This would be an exam where you are given the questions in advance to prepare your answers, then during the exam you have a time limit to write your answers. The alternative is an exam where you do not know what the questions will be until the exam starts (I think this is the more usual type at university level).

Is it worthless to memorize the reading materials before the exam??

I don't think it is time efficient, and I don't think it helps you to learn the material. Memorizing a particularly important quote and the citation for it may be useful - I did that for my exams so that I could write it in my essay. That means that I spent time reviewing my lecture notes and the previous exam questions and came up with a list of probable exam topics and possible exam questions and then prepared accordingly. In most classes there will be one or two key sources that you should be very familiar with but you do not need to memorize any of their papers.

When taking an open-book examination, is it okay to write a memo down on the textbook before-hand?

I have never taken an open-book examination. I do not think they are common (at least they never were when I was a student). I do not know what the rules are but I would assume that notes are ok because you are taking your own class textbook which it is reasonable to assume that you have "used" and marked up. I doubt they will check every page of every textbook. However, you should check about this with the teacher before the exam.

2.3 Exam-taking strategies**How can we reduce stress during exams?**

Prepare thoroughly. Learn the materials and practice taking tests under exam conditions. Learn how to manage your time during the exam, as outlined in the chapter. Learn some relaxation techniques if you are prone to panic.

Should I confirm all the questions first then answer the questions or just answer the questions in order from the beginning.

If it is a test that requires essays to be written, or short responses to be written, and particularly if you should select say three from five to answer, then you should read all questions first. Answer the question you have most confidence about first, but pay attention to time so that you don't write too much. Save your worst question till last, but always answer all required questions to the best of your ability. Never skip a question if it is required. The first 50% of a questions points are easy to get.

How can I not be distracted by other people during the test? I tend to mind other students around me. So, I want to ignore them. But if people solve more quickly than me, I cannot concentrate.

Remind yourself that the exam is not testing your ability against everyone else. It doesn't matter what other people score. It doesn't matter how quickly or slowly you answer. Someone may finish quickly because their answer is short and incomplete. Just focus on your own performance and do not think about what other people are doing.

The book said planning your time in the exam is important. Should I move to the next question even if I am not done with the question I am solving?

I think you should as you can always come back and finish the first question at the end if there is time. Generally, it is easy to get the first 50% of points for any question, and it is difficult to get the final 25% of points (the difference between B+ and A, A and S gets progressively harder requiring more knowledge or greater skill), therefore you should secure those 50% points first before devoting precious time on the final 25% points. Securing a passing grade must always be the priority. Let's say you write three essays in three hours and score 60% on each essay - you pass with 60% (a C grade). On the other hand you could spend 90 minutes on essay 1 and 90 minutes on essay 2 and get an A grade for both, but not answer essay 3 because of lack of time. Your grades then are 80%, 80%, 0% giving a final grade of 53% which is a D - despite two excellent essays you will have failed the exam.

In the situation that I cannot follow my time schedule and there is no time to finish all questions, which should I focus on? Finishing the question that I write at that time, or go to the other question?

Go on to the next question. If a question is worth 100 points, then the first 50 points are easy to get by showing you understand the question and have an outline to answer it with a clear thesis statement. The final 25 points are more difficult to get because you have to demonstrate the higher order thinking skills and support your claims with good evidence. Therefore you should go on to the next question as your total points at the end are likely to be higher.

It is said that students should skip the section if they do not have time and have no clue when they take an exam. However, I often answer half-assed with several questions, are there any tips to overcome this? Which is better, "complete one or two sections and skip others" or "half-assed with everything" when I do not have time?

When you skip questions you should always intend to return to them at the end to write as good an answer as you can, even if it is "half-assed". Never leave a question completely blank if it is a required question. If a question is worth 100 points, then the first 50 points are easy to get by showing you understand the question and have an outline to answer it with a clear thesis statement. The final 25 points are more difficult to get because you have to demonstrate the higher order thinking skills and support your claims with good evidence. Get the easy 50 points for every question and then focus your attention on getting the extra points from the questions that you can answer well.

I am afraid of bad grammar if I focus on time, which should I focus more, grammar or time?

Time. Grammar errors will be treated leniently in a timed exam (but not in a report when you

have plenty of time to proofread). As long as you are comprehensible you shouldn't lose too many points for grammar (unless of course it is an English grammar test).

In a situation where I have no time to proofread, but there is little time to finish all questions, which should I prioritize? Finishing the question, or proofreading?

Finish the questions. You get more points for attempting questions and for the arguments in your essays than you do for correct spelling under time-constrained exam conditions.

Theme 3: Grading Criteria

Theme 3 contains questions about grading criteria. There were 9 questions asked on this topic, and three sub-themes identified: grading method comparison questions about the differences in grading, number of assessed items, and boundaries between particular grades; questions about the amount of time teachers spend grading assignments; and a question about disputing grades.

3.1 Grading Method Comparisons

Why do overseas universities determine their grades in various ways compared to Japan which often scores grades in a single exam?

I don't know. Logistics may play a part. It obviously takes more time and effort to grade multiple (written) assignments, as opposed to listening to one final presentation or machine grading a multiple choice exam. Japanese university education has long been described as an elevator system - students enter as a first year and graduate after four years regardless of how much effort they put in (not in GINOS, of course) whereas in many countries overseas a large percentage of students that start a degree do not finish, many of them because they fail certain courses necessary to progress to the next stage of the program (i.e. it is not possible to take second year courses until first year courses have been passed, which is generally not the case in Japan) - for this reason the educational environment and assessment criteria may be more rigorous overseas.

Is GINOS assessment system easier than other countries' universities?

Maybe. It depends on the course and the teacher though. I think my classes are a fair representation of what to expect in the UK, and so I think it represents EU workloads quite well.

What is the big difference between A and S grade?

80-89% = A, 90-100% = S in GINOS. An S grade for most teachers (I think) would mean that

the work exceeded expectations; A means the work is exactly what was expected; B is acceptable but could be improved in significant ways; C fulfills the minimum requirement, is not really what was expected but shows evidence of minimal effort. In the UK, based on my experience, C is acceptable work with room for improvement, B is what was expected, A exceeds expectations, S is better than the teacher could have done themselves.

What makes it easy to get good grades in our own countries apart from language?

Different levels of academic rigor. It has often been said that Japan has an elevator system at university, that students enter and automatically graduate after doing little more than play tennis for four years with their circle members. Thankfully that is changing as Japan requires more international students to make up for falling numbers of domestic students, and those international students have higher academic expectations.

What should we do when the assessment is suddenly changed? Can we protest it?

I would need to know the context. It is unusual for assessment criteria to change without a very good reason (e.g. COVID-19 forcing classes online). You can protest only if there is a good reason.

Is there a percentage of class participation in other countries too? In Japan, I think most teachers emphasize class participation and it has 10-20% of grades.

It depends on the course but in my experience attendance was not counted towards any of my grades. Every course I took had a final exam, and some had a few reports as well. Skipping class would make it more difficult to understand the materials that were on the exam or in the assignments, but you were free (as an adult) to decide for yourself whether you attended class or not. Of course, if you take a class that has a lot of discussions or presentations then attendance may be graded. Check with the teacher or read the syllabus.

3.2 Time Spent Grading

How long does an instructor spend to correct an assignment?

It depends on the assignment and the quality of the work but the teacher often spends more time on an assignment than an individual student does. Take this class, for example. I have 60 students submitting these worksheets each week. It takes at least 5 minutes (often 10) to read each one and answer the questions. That means at least 6 hours (usually 8) to check assignments for just this class each week. Add to that however long it took to think up the assignment and prepare the relevant materials.

How many times will lecturer take to give an assessment for students on average?

Are you asking how long does it take for a teacher to give feedback to a student? That will

obviously depend on the piece of work being assessed - is it 50 words long or 5,000? Is it being assessed for linguistic accuracy or content? Is it the first or final draft of an assignment? Is it verbal or written feedback? I am spending 5-10 minutes reading each of these worksheets and typing the answers to these questions. There are 60 students in this course. It is not an insignificant amount of time each week.

3.3 Disputing Grades

The system of reconfirming and rechecking the grade (In Toyo's student case, it can be on the Toyo-Net G website) was novel for me. I did not have the system when I was a junior high/high school student. Is disputing toward the already-decided grade common in foreign countries?

I never did this. The thought never once crossed my mind throughout my education. I now think I actually did have a genuine reason to question a grade because my supervisor for my graduation thesis stopped coming to school (depression I think) so I had no guidance at all. A different teacher had to grade my work even though they were not familiar with the topic and had not provided any guidance. Nobody, neither teacher nor fellow student, suggested that I question the grade, even though everyone agreed that I had been treated unfairly and had been expected to get the thesis prize. I did a quick search online and couldn't find any data on the frequency of appeals. I did find this from a Lancaster University webpage: "One of the most common misconceptions surrounding an academic appeal is the belief that simply not being happy with a mark is enough reason to make an appeal." It seems that there are only some specific situations in which you can appeal, at least at that UK university. Here is the full url: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/student-and-education-services/exams-and-assessment/student-appeals/>

Theme 4: Instructor Feedback

The fourth theme identified contains questions concerned with instructor feedback. There were several questions about how to approach feedback and the amount of time that should be spent checking it, and several questions concerned with the correct way to interact with instructors especially concerning clarification of any feedback provided.

4.1 Approaching Instructor Feedback

What should I be careful about in feedback?

Everything. If the teacher took the time to write it then it is important. If I have 100 essays to read and comment on, I only write something if it is important. I don't have time to write irrelevant comments. When a student doesn't read the comments, or doesn't act upon them, it is

very frustrating since it means my time was wasted.

How much time should I spend on checking feedback?

As long as necessary to understand it. It should only take a few minutes to read the comment and consider what it means. If you need to ask a question about it then you should, and note down important feedback to keep in mind for future assignments.

4.2 Protocol for Instructor Interaction

In the chapter, it suggests we make an appointment and ask the meaning when the written comments are unclear. Is asking questions via e-mail rude in this case?

If you can write a polite email then it may be ok. It would be easy to specify what you find unclear and then ask for an appointment at the teachers convenience. If the teacher can clarify quickly and easily in the email they will, and if it will be easier for them to talk to you directly they can then tell you when to see them.

Is it rude to ask a professor about their feedback again because of their handwriting?

Not at all. If a professor has bad writing then they are probably aware of it. I usually say "If you cannot read my comments come and talk to me". Just be polite and say, "I am sorry but I cannot read this word. Could you explain?"

How should students react if the professor doesn't send an e-mail back?

Don't take it personally. Understand that most people have incredibly heavy workloads and that everyone sometimes forgets to do things (your question may feel incredibly important for you but if you have asked a question that you could answer yourself by looking at the syllabus or by using google, it may not be a priority for a teacher that has 100 essays to grade, classes to teach and an exam to prepare by next week). Send a polite reminder email and offer to come and visit the professor's office at a time convenient to the professor, if that is easier for them.

If I cannot get any comments as feedback, is it rude to ask professors to write it down for me? It will be helpful, so I am wondering about it.

Teachers are sometimes very busy so you need to be careful with this. I would recommend you email the teacher and ask if they have time for you to visit them to ask some questions about your assignment. During the chat you can make it known that you want or need more feedback on future assignments.

Theme 5: Portfolio Assessments

The final theme contained questions about portfolio-based assessment. Only one student indicated that they had never experienced this type of assessment before so the questions were more focused on my recommendations on how best to deal with portfolio assessments.

5.1 Clarifying Portfolio Assessment

I have never had a portfolio assessment and I cannot understand it well. What do students do and what is required when they get a portfolio assignment?

A portfolio is just a collection of assignments. What actually goes in the portfolio will depend on the course, but it can include essays, presentations, reports, fieldwork notes, quiz/test/exam scores etc. Be sure to clarify with the teacher which assignments are important for the portfolio and whether each assignment is worth the same amount towards the final grade.

What is the name of this type of portfolio?

These worksheets could be described as an assessment portfolio. The primary function of an assessment portfolio is to document what a student has learned.

5.2 Excelling at Portfolio Assessment

I am not good at doing the assignment which needs to be done steadily like portfolio assessment. Then, how can I overcome or improve this challenge? If you are good at doing work little by little, I would appreciate it if you could give me advice.

You seem to be doing fine with these weekly worksheets. This could be described as an assessment portfolio (the primary function of an assessment portfolio is to document what a student has learned). Make a plan for yourself. You should set aside time slots to work on the assignment, and set yourself small deadlines. Punish yourself for missing a deadline (e.g. no sweets today), and reward yourself for meeting deadlines (e.g. celebrate with chocolate cake!).

Conclusions

All modes of assessment embody various educational and philosophical values, operating at multiple levels (national, institutional, departmental, individual teacher and student levels), and constrained by resources (Elton & Johnston, 2002, p. 84). For this reason there is no one size fits all approach that can be taken when it comes to assessment, and recent decades have seen an explosion in new and innovative assessment methods being introduced to address the practicalities of educational environments as well as student satisfaction. However, even today

innovative assessment methods are a minority practice, and traditional (essay and problem-type final examination) practices dominate (Race, 2001).

Anecdotes about the difference in work load and assessment criteria when studying in Japan and overseas are easy enough to find online, like this one from the experiences of a contributor to 'Japan Today':

"In general, as long as you attend class, you can get units in a Japanese college. Some courses don't even require you to show up, and instead just ask you to write a report and turn it in at the end of the semester to pass the class...But in America, every day we had to study our butts off! In my classes, I had a report to write every other week, on top of reading the textbook and other assigned materials, plus getting my term papers ready to submit. When finals time rolled around, sometimes the library was so packed with students studying that there was no place to sit" (Baseel, 2015).

With anecdotes like these it is natural that Japanese students will be concerned about how they will be able to perform and successfully deal with assessment at different institutions overseas. Add to this the dominance of essay and problem-type final examinations, which for obvious reasons can disadvantage nervous EFL learners, and it is no surprise that assessment during study abroad is a topic of great trepidation for exchange students.

We must ensure that the GINOS curriculum provides opportunities for students to experience the full range of traditional and alternative assessment methods during their first year of study, before they encounter them for the first time during study abroad exchanges. Both language and content teachers should be mindful to include opportunities for GINOS students to practice a wide range of assessment modes in their various classes, so that they have the greatest possibility of success overseas.

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