

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

Empowering higher education through heutagological assessment strategies

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This abstract explores how the redevelopment of a Master of Education program embraced heutagological principles to create an adaptable, resilient, and future-ready learning environment. Grounded in adult learning theory and social constructivism (Blaschke, 2019), heutagogy offers a compelling response to the needs of contemporary students navigating diverse professional, cultural, and technological contexts.

Our subject redesign began with a foundational question: Who are our learners? In our case, they are working professionals with rich, varied backgrounds who seek meaningful opportunities to apply and extend their expertise. Traditional assessment strategies often constrain such learners, focusing on prescriptive outputs rather than individual growth and agency. In contrast, a heutagological approach empowers students to actively shape their learning journeys by setting personal goals, selecting relevant resources, and reflecting on real-world application (Blaschke & Hase, 2015).

This session shares how we embedded heutagological principles into every layer of the curriculum, particularly the assessment strategy. The assessment strategy intentionally incorporates assessment of, for, and as learning, recognising the importance of evaluation, feedback, and learner self-regulation as interconnected components of the learning process. Metacognition and self-efficacy are intentionally scaffolded to support learners in becoming resilient and reflective. Assessments are not merely tools of measurement but engines of learning. From reflective journals to digital toolkits and advocacy plans, students are encouraged to explore their own context and present their understanding in diverse formats. The emphasis shifts from product to process, promoting engagement, academic integrity, and deeper conceptual learning (Blaschke & Hase, 2015).

A key feature of the assessment design is the focus on real-world relevance and personal meaning. Students are encouraged to explore issues or challenges connected to their own professional or community context, applying theory to practice in ways that create tangible value. This approach embodies authentic assessment, situates learning in lived experience, and reflects broader course themes such as empowerment, advocacy, and social responsibility. As a result, students often report a stronger sense of ownership over their work, and educators observe greater depth, originality, and critical engagement in their submissions. The reflective structure of the assessments also supports social-emotional learning by encouraging learners to explore their identity, values, and professional purpose, fostering wellbeing alongside skill development.

The heutagological model also fosters inclusivity and adaptability. Offering students agency in how they demonstrate mastery not only accommodates diverse learning needs but encourages critical and creative thinking. Through strategies like process-driven assessment, learner-contextualised tasks, and reflection-infused outputs, students are supported to become agile, self-regulated learners prepared for an uncertain future (Carless et al., 2017). The design is sustainable across hybrid, online, and face-to-face delivery modes, ensuring consistency of student experience and adaptability to institutional needs.

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence into Authentic Assessment

As artificial intelligence reshapes the educational landscape, its integration into assessment design must be intentional and values driven. In our Master of Education redevelopment, AI is positioned as a catalyst for deeper inquiry. Students are encouraged to critically engage with AI tools, such as generative platforms, to support research, ideation, and reflection. This approach aligns with heutagological principles by fostering learner agency, self-direction, and metacognitive

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awareness (Blaschke & Hase, 2015; Narayan & Vanderburg, 2025).

Rather than policing AI use, assessments are designed to promote transparency, ethical reasoning, and critical evaluation of AI-generated content. Learners reflect on how AI influences their thinking, decision-making, and professional practice, embedding academic integrity within a framework of trust and personalisation (Anthology, 2024; Dolbin et al., 2024). This empowers students to become discerning users of technology, capable of navigating complex, real-world challenges with confidence and integrity.

AI-supported assessment also scaffolds metacognition and self-efficacy, enabling learners to identify patterns in their thinking and refine their approaches (Lineman, Sweet, & Sutton, 2025; Searle Center, 2025). These strategies align with process-driven, authentic assessment models that prioritise learner context, critical engagement, and adaptability (Carless et al., 2017).

Looking ahead, we argue that assessment design must prioritise flexibility, authenticity, and student voice. In the age of artificial intelligence and rapid technological transformation, academic integrity cannot rest on control or surveillance. Instead, it must be built on trust, personalisation, and critical engagement. Heutagogy offers a timely and sustainable path forward, where learners are not passive recipients of content but co-creators of their educational experiences.

This presentation offers practical strategies, examples, and design principles that participants can adopt and adapt in their own contexts. In doing so, it contributes to the conversation on how higher education can remain relevant and empowering. It aims to equip learners to thrive in a future defined by continuous change.

Keywords: Heutagogy, learner agency, process-driven assessment, metacognition, self-efficacy, authentic assessment, academic integrity, professional learners, critical thinking, artificial intelligence.

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