Tip sheet – Marking in FLO using the assignment tool

In FLO, the assignment tool is widely used to communicate assessment information, for students to submit assessment documents and to provide feedback and marks. This tool can also be used to submit online text, multimedia artefacts (e.g. videos, images), Mahara pages/collections or simply as a space to bring together instructions, marks and feedback for activities performed outside of FLO (e.g. class presentations, practical skill assessments, dance, art exhibits, paper-based tests). At times it may also be appropriate to use this tool alongside other FLO tools to maximise your options for marking, providing feedback and consistency within your topic or course. Its diversity brings many benefits for students, tutors and topic coordinators [PDF file].

In this tip sheet we will look at the things to consider when planning and building your assessment, along with functions available to help you manage and mark your assessment. Tips for topic coordinators as well as tutors are included, if you are working in a teaching team, we recommend you work through the tips and recommendations within this sheet as a team so you can determine the most practical and effective way to mark for your students.

Planning how you intend to mark

During the design stage of each assessment, a rubric should be developed to document how the assessment should be marked. This provides alignment to the relevant learning outcomes and instruction for teaching team members when processing submissions. The topic coordinator is responsible for translating this information into a format that functions within FLO by choosing the most appropriate tool and settings. It can be helpful to consult with a Learning Designer at the design stage to ensure your assessment ideas are technically possible while there is still time to make changes if required.

Once you have the pedagogical design of your assessment sorted, you may find the following planning questions helpful. These can help you with technical decisions related to; how students will submit their work, how you intend to mark the work and how you will return feedback and marks. These technical decisions can be made as a group (course or topic level) or as an individual topic coordinator and could be applied across a course or within a single topic. If you are new to a teaching team or unsure if these items have been discussed previously, it would be worth checking with your topic or course coordinator. You can then work with any decisions already implemented at a course level to ensure your topic is set up consistently with related topics. This will save you work and will also be immensely helpful for your students and teaching team as it will fit with their expectations. If these items have not previously been discussed, you could work with your course coordinator to begin the process.

Implementing your decisions

Once you know exactly how the assignment tool needs to function, you can begin setting it up. You can access help via the FLO staff support site (FLOSS). During setup, the assignment purpose will determine the required settings (eg video assessment, group assessment, Mahara ePortfolio assessment). Once your assessment is underway, there are several features in FLO that will help you to manage assignments on a student by student basis (eg filtering, extensions, overrides, marking workflow).

Getting started on marking

Once all submissions have been made, you will want to get started on marking. Depending on your role (e.g. tutor, topic coordinator), your use of the assignment tool may be different, especially if you are part of a large topic.

If you are a topic coordinator managing a teaching team you will need to determine the method of allocating students to tutors for marking purposes, and you will need to setup your rubric or marking guide.

If you are a tutor you will need to know which students you are responsible for marking and have an easy way to identify them. Most likely your topic coordinator will let you know which method of allocation is being used in your topic: mark all students within a group or mark a random allocation of students.

You will also need to know what type of rubric is being used for the assessment. The topic coordinator will set this up, and this will determine how you should mark. If an online rubric or marking guide is to be used, marking will be completed online. If feedback files are being used, you can mark online or offline. Step by step instructions are available for each method, and an overview is given below.

Offline marking

Offline marking involves choosing a group of students and then downloading all their submissions, a feedback file for each of them and a grading worksheet. You can then mark on your computer or tablet provided you have software that can open the file types you are working with. You do not need to be connected to the internet while marking. You will need internet access to view the Turnitin reports, but this can be done before or after annotating submissions and completing the feedback file.

If using offline marking, each submission and feedback file is automatically named with the students FAN at the start of the file name during the bulk download process. This allows you to work with both files at the same time, know who each file belongs to easily and saves you from having to create a feedback file for each student in your group. You can also combine the annotated submissions and completed feedback files into a single zip folder and return all of them at once to FLO. If you have lots of students to mark, this can be very efficient.

When marking and providing feedback in MS Word, use comments in preference to track changes. Track changes means you are editing a student's work and these changes can then be accepted and integrated at the click of a button. A student will learn more by having to read your comments and determine how to integrate them. For efficiency, you may want to keep an MS Word document containing frequently used comments (comment bank). This could be constructed at a topic level to bring consistency to the feedback given to all students, or you could compile your own. Having your comment document open during marking will allow you to quickly copy and paste into the student's submission or feedback file. You may also like to use highlighting to note key things within the students work. If you highlight, make sure you provide a key for the student so they can clearly see what each colour relates to and can easily understand what you mean. For efficiency you could add the comment tool and highlighting tool to the quick access toolbar in MS Word to eliminate the need to keep swapping between tabs.

If using the grading worksheet, you must use the downloaded spreadsheet, not add or change any of the columns and you must keep it in the .CSV format, otherwise it will not upload when you try to return your marks. Each time you open this file, a good habit is to expand the column widths so that you can ensure you enter the marks into the correct column. You are also able to add feedback comments to this spreadsheet if the topic coordinator has allowed for them within the setup of the assignment tool.

Online marking

You can annotate students assignment within the grading interface directly within FLO whilst connected to the internet. This method allows you to work with either PDF or MS Word file submissions without the need for any extra software. Online marking also allows you to enter a mark directly into FLO, move through your group of students (click save and show next) or choose individual students if you only have one or two assignments to mark (eg late submissions or resubmissions).

Online marking can be used in conjunction with online rubrics or marking guides, or with feedback files. If you are using feedback files, you will need to download the files and then upload a completed copy for each student. It is therefore more efficient to mark online when using an online rubric or marking guide. Using online rubrics or marking guides for assignments where there is no submission to be made in FLO can be extremely efficient. Marking can take place using a portable device at the point students complete

their required task (eg during a class presentation or whilst observing students perform a specialist skill in a laboratory or auditorium). This eliminates the need to record marks and feedback on paper and transcribe them to FLO after the event.

Group assessments

Group assessments can be marked using either online or offline marking methods. However, if the assessment requires one submission per group, it is more efficient to mark online. When marking online, once you mark one student from the group, by default that grade and feedback is applied to every student in the group. It is possible to change this default option if you would prefer to provide individualised feedback and marks to each group member. In contrast, if using offline marking with this style of assessment, on download you will receive a copy of the joint submission file for each student in the group, and a separate feedback file for each student in the group. You will then need to annotate each individual file and return them as well as entering marks for each individual student.

Text matching

Text-matching software is required to be used for all text-based assessments. In special circumstances exemptions are possible. If you are the topic coordinator, once you have obtained approval for exemption, you should contact your local eLearning team with proof of approval. The eLearning team can then ensure text matching software is turned off for the assignment.

Where the file that students will submit is not compatible with text matching software (i.e. images, Mahara, video, URL, completed placement reports), exemptions are not needed but the use of text matching software is not appropriate. In these circumstances text matching will not produce a useful report. In these scenarios, topic coordinators can forward a written request to their local eLearning team.

Where an assessment requires multiple submissions of drafts, it is not appropriate for the draft submissions to be saved to the text matching database as this will produce false matches. Topic coordinators can forward a written request to their local eLearning team requesting that draft submissions are not saved to the text matching database.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar with the use of text-matching software and the interpretation of text-matching originality reports. Information is available to assist you to support academic integrity through text matching software and there are links in FLO sites to support students.

When setting up your assignment tool consider what students are asked to submit. The use of cover sheets, proformas or the need to paste a rubric into their submission will all have an impact on the text matching report. The inclusion of a cover sheet is not necessary within FLO as every student is identified by their unique login. Likewise, there is no need for students to add a rubric in their submission. Rubrics should be facilitated via online rubrics, marking guides or feedback files in FLO.

Resubmissions

It is worth noting the difference between reverting a submission back to draft and providing a student with a resubmission or allowing another attempt. If a student uploads the wrong file or wishes to change the file they have submitted **before** the work is marked, the assignment should be reverted back to draft to allow the student to make the required changes. If the assignment **has been marked** and the student meets the criteria for a resubmission, the student should be allowed another attempt. Using the resubmission function allows you to track all the students' submissions, along with all feedback and marks, providing a complete history of interactions for the assignment between that student and staff.

Support and resources

The assignment tool is a rich tool that offers a myriad of marking options to suit several assessments. If you would like to learn more about the assignment tool and marking options, work through the self-paced

workshop or attend a workshop. If you or your team are unsure of any functionality you would like to use, contact your eLearning team. Options and possibilities to suit your specific circumstances can be discussed with a Learning Designer.