Designing a Work Integrated Assessment

The concept of a work-integrated assessment is an assessment where the tasks and conditions are more closely aligned to what you would experience within employment.

Module: ____________________________
Co-ordinator: _______________________
Year: ______________________________

Multiple Assessment Points
Move to a more distributed pattern of assessment; consider introducing ‘surprise’ points.
Assessments are often delivered in the form of one summative assessment, e.g., an exam or essay, at the end of a period of formal learning. In employment, however, ‘assessment’ or evaluation points tend to occur frequently. In addition, timing is often out of individual control, and consequently it can be necessary to juggle competing tasks at short notice.
Using multiple assessment points helps to develop reflective thinking, whilst ‘surprise’ points support task prioritisation.

Peer / Self Review
Include peer and/or self review explicitly in the assessment process.
Typically, the review of assessments (i.e., feedback) in formal education is only provided by teaching staff. In employment, however, much of the review process comes in multiple forms, e.g., informal peer feedback from colleagues, formal and informal reviews from clients, and self-review of personal performance.
Including peer and/or self review explicitly within an assessment helps students to develop critical thinking skills, and encourages articulation and evidencing.

Varied Audiences
Aim to set explicit audiences for each assessment point.
In higher education the audience for an assessment is implicitly the academic that sets it, who will naturally be already aligned in some way with the course and/or module. This contrasts with employment, where the audience can be peers, but is more often the client or another external third party, with different values, priorities and expectations.
Having to think for a different audience on an assessment provokes greater reflective thinking, and requires new types of synthesis.

Light Structure
Lightly structure the overall assessment; reward student approaches.
Most thinking on assessment suggests that there should be explicit guidance to students concerning how and where marks are attained. However in employment part of the challenge for the individual and/or team is the structuring of the work that needs to be completed. Tasks need to be identified, processes decided, and priorities allocated.
Using a light structure approach encourages students to plan tasks and goals in order to solve a bigger problem, strengthening their project management and prioritisation skills.

‘Real World’ Problem / Data
Set an overall real world problem, supported by real world data.
Purely academic learning might require a theoretical problem in order to test a theoretical understanding. In employment, though problems tend to be very real, and data rarely comes in coherent, standardised forms. It is usually in ‘messier’ formats that need to be interpreted to be of use.
Using a real world problem and real world data helps to develop skills in analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

Collaborative Working
Create teams of students from the outset, encourage collaboration.
Many forms of assessment require working alone, yet employment invariably requires some form of collaboration and team work, and often with unknown and perhaps even challenging individuals.
Encouraging students to work collaboratively and in teams improves their ability to negotiate and discuss, and develops their understanding of team roles and role flexibility.

Analysis → Design → Evaluation