

BUILDING CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE FIRST YEAR BIOLOGY ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE WITH THE *DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING* (DUAL) PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Universities have a responsibility to deliver an accessible academic curriculum to an increasingly diverse student cohort with a widening range of academic preparedness for study. For first year students, academic assessment can be mystifying, with its unfamiliar conventions and opaque standards. The *Developing Understanding of Assessment for Learning* (DUAL) Program aims to de-mystify biology laboratory report writing with an approach that integrates best practice initiatives for both students and markers. DUAL makes the conventions of scientific report writing clear by providing written guidelines and an online report writing tutorial. The required standard of report writing is communicated to students when they participate in a mock moderation session, requiring them to mark and discuss reports of varying standards. In the following class formative peer assessment of draft reports is conducted. Before submission of the second report, DUAL guides students to develop the meta-cognitive skill of reflecting on their learning by using an 'action plan' to record how they will apply feedback from their first report to their second. Although marks awarded for the second report showed no statistically significant improvement for the cohort as a whole, student perceptions of DUAL were very positive.

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