Anatomy of Assessment

Lay Summary Video blog (vlog)

Faculty: Medicine
Department: School of Public Health
Module: Research Portfolio 4
Degree: Global Master of Public Health (GMPH)
Level: Postgraduate
Number of students: 105
Module ECTS: 15
Weighting: 10%
Module type: Core

Insights colour key

Educational Developer

Inclusivity

Learning Designer

Registry

Careers

Assessment overview

A lay summary video blog (vlog) is a 5 minute individual video presentation providing an overview of students' research project presented to a non-scientific audience. It is developed alongside a journal article (find case study here) that summarizes research findings to a scientific audience. Both assessments are equivalents/ alternatives to a more traditional combination of a dissertation and a viva.

Programme overview

Global Masters of Public Health is a fully online degree with 105 students (numbers as of 2021/22) coming from across different parts of the world. The delivery takes place through Coursera platform with synchronous and asynchronous sessions delivered throughout the duration of the programme. Students on the programme are part time mature students who are often working and are spread across many different locations and time zones, hence the programme is spread over 2-3 years.

The programme aims to mirror the Masters of Public Health programme which is delivered full time on campus. In fact, GMPH students get their certificate, it says Master of Public Health, regardless of whether they are in person one year or online over two or three years. The main assessment point on both programmes is the ability to design and deliver a research project on a topic of students' choice and be able to present the results in writing and orally (traditionally in the form of a dissertation and a viva). The Journal article therefore directly corresponds to a dissertation component that the full time students are asked to write and the vlog elements is thought to be equivalent to a viva.

Design decisions

Rationale for the assessment type

As the intention was to keep assessments on the online and face to face course testing similar skills, the 5 minute video blog was thought to resemble the on campus Masters viva. This is where students have to present for 15 minutes, which is then followed up by questions lasting approximately 5 minutes.

When deciding on the length of the video an important consideration needs to be given to ensuring that all the ILOs / assessment criteria can be reasonably addressed in this time. In order to be 'authentic' a vlog should reflect the likely duration that material of this nature would be viewed for and 5 minutes seems to be about the average.

The 5 minute time limit is a realistic time for the students to be able to convey the message, given the lengths of public engagements and attention span of the audience. In Global and Public Health a message needs to be delivered in a quick impactful format and this time limit mimics this.

The video blog is not a full equivalent to a viva as there are no questions that follow, however, the team wanted to develop something that would be useful for students rather than just asking them to make a presentation on their research when they just wrote it up. The journal article is them presenting their research to a scientific audience of a particular journal

Interviewee: Natasha Croome, Senior Teaching Fellow in Public Health, Deputy course director

A pre-recorded video blog is a method that makes assessment processes easier in case of mitigating circumstances. It is also easier to give a sample to an external examiner compared to a live viva.

From careers perspective producing a vlog is a much more authentic piece of work than a viva, especially in this context of Public Health where adapting communication style is key. Public Health practitioners are more likely to interact with lay audience rather than academics, at whom vivas are directed. Also, within the Public Health profession one might sometimes find themselves delivering messages that do not generate any questions.

For methods that assess oral presentation skills or ability to communicate something efficiently orally it is always good to have a learning outcome that captures those skills.

article, whereas the vlog is them presenting their research to a lay audience. This is a very important skill, particularly for Public Health professionals as part of a Public Health professional's duties is engaging and educating, discussing Public Health issues with the public who are often not part of the professional community, and who don't have the same knowledge.

The assessments helps students develop communication skills around adapting information and tailoring to 'customers' aka patients which are important employability skills that Public Health professionals should be able to demonstrate. Having said that those skills are transferable and are useful also for those not going into that specific profession.

For the on campus Masters of Public Health - in their dissertation, the students are asked to submit two different abstracts - one that's the scientific abstract, the technical abstract, and one that is an abstract for a lay audience. Hence the vlog is trying to mirror this as well.

Fit with other assessment methods on the module and the programme
The module aims for students to achieve the following Intended Learning Outcomes:
1. Conduct a research study in order to answer a research question;
2. Structure a paper that sets out all the elements of research in a clear, articulate, concise and precise manner;
3. Critique methods or data used and use ancillary insights to suggest how these could affect the conclusions;
4. Draw conclusions and formulate recommendations to inform further research, practice, and/or policy;
5. Clearly explain findings to a lay audience in order to engage the wider public in research;
6. Design a comprehensive dissemination plan to maximise the impact of the research.

The assessment is part of Research Portfolio 4 (RP4) module. There are four modules that are interlinked, i.e. research portfolios 1, 2, 3 and 4. The vlog is the culmination of research portfolio 4 and throughout those four modules the students design and develop their own research project. In research portfolio 1, they designed and developed the research question. They complete a literature review which they are advised to use as the basis for their introduction section for their journal article, i.e. amend it from 1,500 words to an appropriate number of words for their article and research. In Portfolio 2, they designed and developed their methodology. They prepare a protocol which should be used as the basis of their methods section for the journal article (with amended word count). In Portfolio 3, they apply for ethics if required. And finally in Portfolio 4 they undertake their research and then they write it up as a journal article. Throughout the different modules there are different assessments and it's not just the journal article that is the final one at the end of RP4 (research

portfolio) and the end of the programme. RP4, however, has the highest weighting out of the Masters because it's equivalent to students undertaking their research. It has more credit weighting than the other ones. The students don't actually start undertaking the research until research portfolio 4 - the last module. The vlog is the final assessment undertaken for the module and is strongly linked to the Journal Article. Other assessment methods across the RP modules include:

- RP1 (5 ECTS) Search Strategy (no word count) 15%, Research question and literature review (written assessment, 1500 words, 85%);
- RP2 (5 ECTS) Research proposal (written assessment, 100%);
- RP3 (5 ECTS) (choose two topics from ethics, funding, public involvement and write a 500 word essay (50% for each essay)

The Journal article is a 4,000 word assessment that asks students to present the results of their research in a journal format (a case study can be found here). The vlog links directly to this assignment and asks to report on the results but taking into account a different audience.

Both assessments are thought to be authentic. Given that introducing greater authenticity was one of the aims of the curriculum redesign, both assessments fit into the ethos of the review and carry on the authentic thread present throughout the programme.

There are many opportunities for the students to produce vlogs on the programme hence this assessment is not their first experience with vlogging. Students tend to find vlogs relatively workload heavy hence those are limited to only what genuinely helps students to better demonstrate ILOs.

Practicalities

Preparing students for the assessment

All of the assessments for the module are discussed in detail at the start of the module. The students are made aware of what the assessment is, what the timeline is and how they will be assessed (i.e. what the criteria are). This information is also available in the handbook. In addition to that there are live drop-in sessions where assessment can be clarified further and due to the nature of the cohort students are encouraged to email or use the forum for any further clarification and support if the live sessions are schedule at a time when attendance is made difficult due to prior commitments or time zones.

The feedback from last year's cohort suggested that vlogs took a long time to prepare which meant that the week that they had between the submission of the Journal Article and the submission of the vlog was not sufficient time to fully prepare the assignment if no prior work was done. This was because the students tended to concentrate on the

While important for all assessments, for 'non-traditional' approaches it is particularly important that both staff and students are clear on the purposes, benefits and expectations involved. Appropriate opportunities for formative assessment and feedback built into the programme / module design can be key in this. For more innovative methods, exemplars can play a role but these need to be used critically.

A video blog, or a pre-recorded video presentation of any kind is always a good inclusive alternative to a live presentation as it benefits students who have issues with processing speed. The flip side of having it as the main method is that some students might find video as a barrier. It is useful, therefore, to offer alternatives to this assessment method in the spirit of inclusivity. Alternatives that could be considered is a written piece, such as a transcript for example (if presentation skills are not tested) or an audio version (podcast).

Clarity of expectations are key when it comes to implementing new assessment types. Self or peer review / assessment of exemplars could be an effective means of formative assessment and / or preparation / helping to manage students' anxieties relating to approaching assessments. It might also help to give clearer guidance / a breakdown structure to show how long they are expected to spend on each part of this. In cases where using examples of past student work is inappropriate, developing some 'sample' exemplars which could be used as a review exercise so that the students get a better idea of what 'good' performance looks like.

output in terms of incorporating pretty pictures, graphs and figures that took a long time. It was originally never the vision of the team for the students to spend so much time on the aesthetics; rather, they wanted students to focus on the words that were being used since the skill that was assessed was adapting the language according to the needs of the audience. Hence this year the team made those requirements clearer by telling the students what they can and can't use--they can only just speak into a camera, they can't use graphics, or anything that distracts from the spoken message. This helped to make the outputs more uniform and address the learning outcomes.

The students were also given four questions to cover in their video (imagine they were being interviewed):
• "why did you conduct this study?"
• "what was your methodology?",
• "what did you find?" etc,
• "what did you conclude?"

This meant that students had to cover all aspects of their research as they did in the journal article but they still have to imagine that they're presenting to a lay audience. In terms of the imaginary interview, the team specified that they should think of it as being interviewed by a newspaper so to imagine that it's a non-scientific lay audience.

The team tried to keep that instruction uniform as well because there was a lot of anxiety about what the lay public is even in the context of imagining being interviewed for a newspaper as the audience will differ from paper to paper. The team also did not want to specify which paper so that students are not disadvantaged because they are not familiar with the UK press landscape. In the previous year the students were asked to select their lay audience, and there was a lot of anxiety around that. Specifying the audience is not what the assessment is trying to assess. The focus of assessment is checking if students can take their journal article, condense it into 5 minutes, and understand that the way you would explain your research to someone who's in the same area is different to how you would explain it to someone who is not from the same area. Narrowing down this focus triggered further guidance around the audience. This is the aspect that the team are still considering how to best address.

The students are not provided with any exemplars. This is because using any exemplars from previous year would compromise anonymity, this is not the kind of assessment that can be made anonymous hence no exemplars are used.

Before this assessment, there are several other vlogs in other modules. In the module that has the first vlog they do provide quite a bit of introduction to video editing, so the support and guidance on this aspect

of the assessment is provided.

As always with assessments that require technical skills, support, training and resources on how to make videos of oneself is crucial, both the video and the sound aspect. As a student, I would also worry that markers may be influenced by the quality of the video, for instance that videos with better sound or lighting may score better. One way to mitigate this is by a teacher making a video of themselves talking about anything (e.g. explaining what is needed for the assessment) that would be of the expected 'home-made' quality, but not of studio or professional quality. The requirement students don't read off a script may be difficult to enforce in the era of easily available autocue-type apps.

While the format of a vlog is familiar to the students as they have an opportunity to submit vlog assignments for other modules, the aspect that they don't really have as much experience in is producing a lay summary. In research portfolio 3, there is a section called public involvement and within that there is a section on how to develop a lay summary. Here lay audience is defined as anyone outside of their field of study. There is a formative assessment where students develop a lay summary and they can review that and get feedback on that. That is the only prior chance for them to practice lay summary skills prior to submitting the vlog.

Marking

The marking criteria focus on the clarity of their project, i.e. would it be understandable by the lay audience? Some of it is also about their performance, for example, how are they speaking, and are they looking at the person? Hence while the content itself, the research project itself is the same and is assessed via the Journal Article assessment, here the focus is on a different set of skills. The marking criteria are as follows:

- Lay Audience (including adapting content, how understandable to the content is and use of jargon or complex language)
- Content (including structure, coherence, relevance, topics covered)
- Style (including delivery, language, tone, grammar, rapport with audience)
- Presentation Structure

There are two blind independent markers marking the assignments separately. They're all academics within the school of Public Health. Those markers are identified from the department based on their interests and research methodologies they apply in their work. The submission day is a week after the Journal article. The module lead allocates one person as the first marker, one person as the second marker, and then only the first marker comments are seen by the students. But the first marker is supposed to discuss the work [with the second marker] and potentially combine their comments into one. Hence ultimately just one set of comments is provided to the students.

The same pair of markers review both the Journal article and the corresponding vlog and provide separate grades and feedback for each. When it comes to experts marking a piece of work that demonstrates

successful engagement with lay audience it is difficult to assume they are not part of a field they are. However, these are individuals within public health/epidemiology so are familiar with needing to communicate with the lay public and why. The team ask the same markers who marked the journal article because they can then ascertain how the language has been changed between the two audience types.

The vlog is quicker to mark than the journal article; however, some of the criteria do overlap so that overlap can be can be difficult for markers. Also, the feedback is often much less than the journal article because of the length of the assignment.

The submission of the vlog differs depending upon the video file format that Wiseflow is able to play (usually MP4 file). Students directly upload to Wiseflow. Students were not told specifically how to record (e.g. could use phone or laptop).

File format (as stated in text) and potentially file size (some submission tools have file size limits) both may require support, especially for less tech-savvy students.

Feedback

Many public health professionals visit communities and provide education, discussion and engagement, and this assessment is trying to pick up that key skill. It isn't a perfect match with exactly what they're going to do when they're working, because they won't necessarily film themselves in their future career or be talking to no one who can respond but it provides an opportunity to practice that skill. The purpose of the feedback therefore is that they can then review how well they've done with the task, and think when they next need to discuss something with the public and how they could improve choosing appropriate language.

Limitations of the assessment type

- Having an additional assessment after a high weighted submission (of the journal article) can be additional burden for the students. However, this is equivalent to the on campus students who are not done with assessment after the dissertation but they still need to prepare for the

viva;
- While this assessment is meant to be authentic, talking to a video camera can be slightly artificial, however it is currently the best way to test the skills that the team wants to test and as close to a face-to-face conversation that students might be having as professionals;
- In addition to that there is no opportunity to ask questions which would usually happen during public engagement hence the team is trying to find other ways where the lay aspect would be maintained but in a different assessment form, such as a written summary;
- Vlogs tend to be time consuming for the students (informal feedback suggests it could be anything between several hours to days) and sometimes their attention as to what is important and what they need to dedicate time to is misdirected, in this case away from the language towards the visuals;
- Managing students' anxiety around things like: speaking to camera, being filmed, own perception of not being too tech-savvy, potential markers' bias towards recordings of better quality, inequality in terms of device access (iPhone 14 will make a better video that iPhone 6) can be difficult but manageable through building students' confidence. It requires a careful approach and support (and therefore extra resource burden on the course team);

Advantages of the assessment type

- Allows to test skills needed in the future workplace in a more creative way
- Due to students being in different time zones and working full/part time it is very difficult to schedule time with the students. Some modules have tried to schedule live presentations via zoom previously and it always has complications (e.g. some students unable to attend, some have poor connection). A pre-recorded vlog is a more feasible approach for a large international online cohort.
- Especially in the modern world a video can be a creative and interesting way of getting across a message that will connect with people. As a professional in this field you might find yourself talking to a video camera. Most employees these

days will require an asynchronous interviews which require talking to a camera. While the idea might seems slightly artificial the reality is that post COVID talking to a camera is much more common place professional practice. Hence coming across confidently and eloquently on camera has become a new skill that employers desire, especially in Public Health sector where the purpose is to instigate change and convince the audience to do/ not to do something. Hence overall the idea of a vlog is more authentic in current times.

Advice for implementation

- Providing sufficient guidance for the students at the start is essential. With this assessment, the team constantly have received questions such as "should the filming be done in one go, what background should be used etc." The more detailed guidance is given at the beginning, the easier it is cognitively for the student. Watch this video on innovative forms of assessment.
- Ensure it is clear for the students what is expected from the output, in this case quality of the language over quality of the video output in terms of visuals. This is important to ensure their efforts are directed appropriately and they don't spend endless amount of time on the assessments
- Additionally, it may be needed to provide guidance for the markers as well as the team had to clarify why students did not include any graphics.
- Give students opportunities to practise and potentially receive friendly feedback in a safe environment (seeing oneself on camera for the first time is daunting for a lot of people).
- Be clear about what the expected quality is - some sort of exemplars would help, not necessarily previous assessments (for reasons mentioned in text) but a recording by one of the course team showing what is required, and maybe also sharing some tips of how a non-technical person has gone about making the recording.
- It is always advisable to encourage students to include video captions to make their videos more inclusive
- Offering alternatives to the video for students for whom talking to the camera can be challenging

could be helpful to give everyone a chance to demonstrate important skills, especially if presentation skills as such or video production skills are not part of the ILOs and marking criteria.