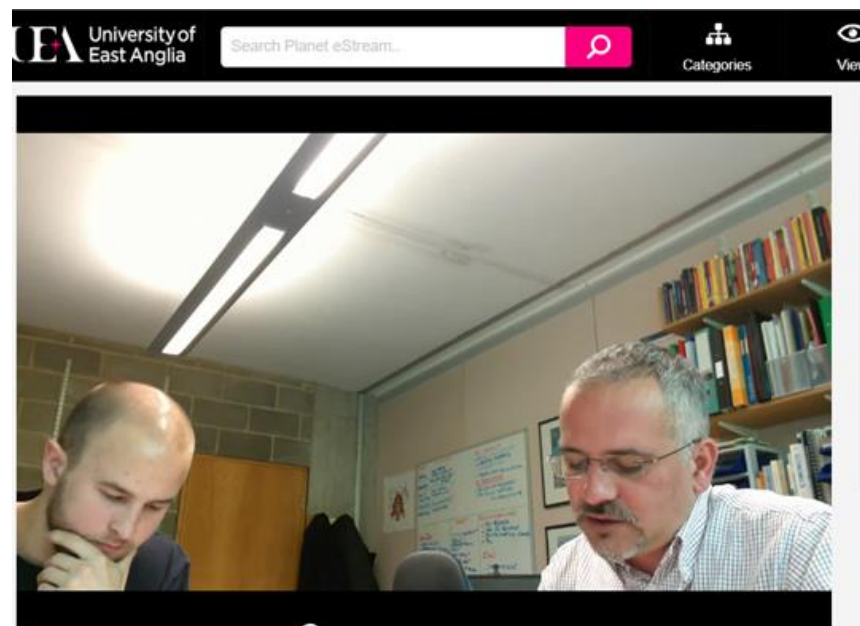


Talking Your Way Through Employability: evaluative conversations to develop confidence and critical thinking in Economics

Fabio R. Aricò
Naomi Winstone

DEE - Warwick
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YOUR PRESENTER



Fabio Aricò

UK National Teaching Fellow

Associate Professor of Macroeconomics

Director of Learning, Teaching, and Quality

School of Economics – University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

Research fields

- Higher Education policy and practice (widen. access, satisfaction)
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Self-Assessment and Academic Self-Efficacy

Twitter: @FabioArico

OUTLINE

- 1. Introduction to viva voce exams and context**
- 2. How to do it?**
- 3. Evaluation of 2017-18 pilot**
- 4. Research on 2018-19 data**

Introduction to viva voce exams and context

POSITIONING

I am Italian and I trained at an Italian University

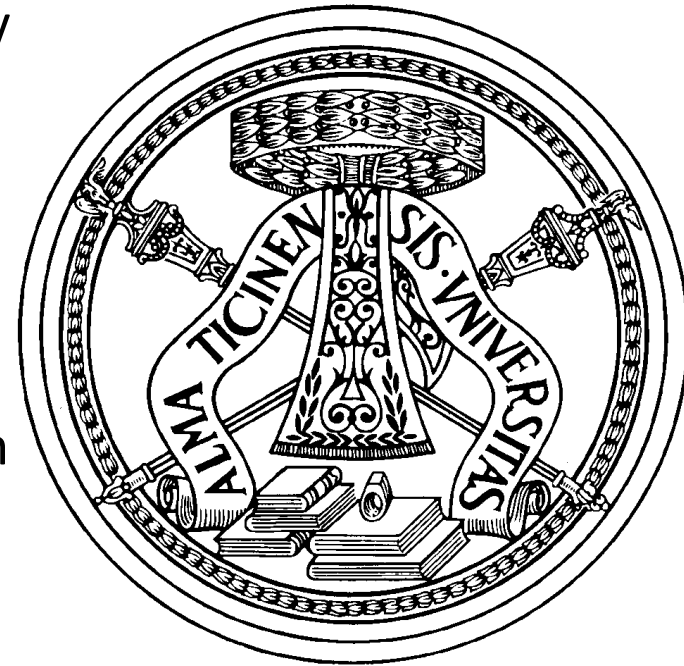
Backward:

Teaching practice in Italy is more didactic

Forward:

For the majority of disciplines, every final exam is composed of a written + oral component

The oral component is what shapes Italian students' critical ability and discussion skills.



I strongly believe we should make better use of oral assessment in the UK.

HISTORY of ECONOMIC THOUGHT

- Context:** Year 2 optional module, popular with PPE students
- Enrolment:** 70 students in 2017-18, 50 students in 2018-19
- Delivery:** lectures (reading and commenting original texts)
seminars (more readings, ideally student-led)
- Content:** Petty, Smith, Ricardo, Marx, Bentham, Mill & Marginalists,
Hayek & Austrians, Keynes, Friedman, McCloskey, Sudegen
- Challenges:** non-technical, so tests and exams are pointless
want to develop critical thinking, ability to discuss,
see the bigger picture, express through different media.

VIVA VOCE ASSESSMENT

Uncommon Hounsell et al. (2007) – Why is it not used at UG level?

Few examples: Nursing (Davis & Engward, 2018), Dentistry (Ganji, 2017), Business Studies (Pearce & Lee, 2009), Education (Carless, 2002), Mathematics (Iannone & Simpson, 2012)

Unresearched Dobson (2008) – not conceptualised in literature

Needed Economics Network Survey (2018-19)
 → communication to non-economists
 → creativity and imaginative powers

A presentation is not a viva voce
 Authenticity → what could be closer to a job interview?

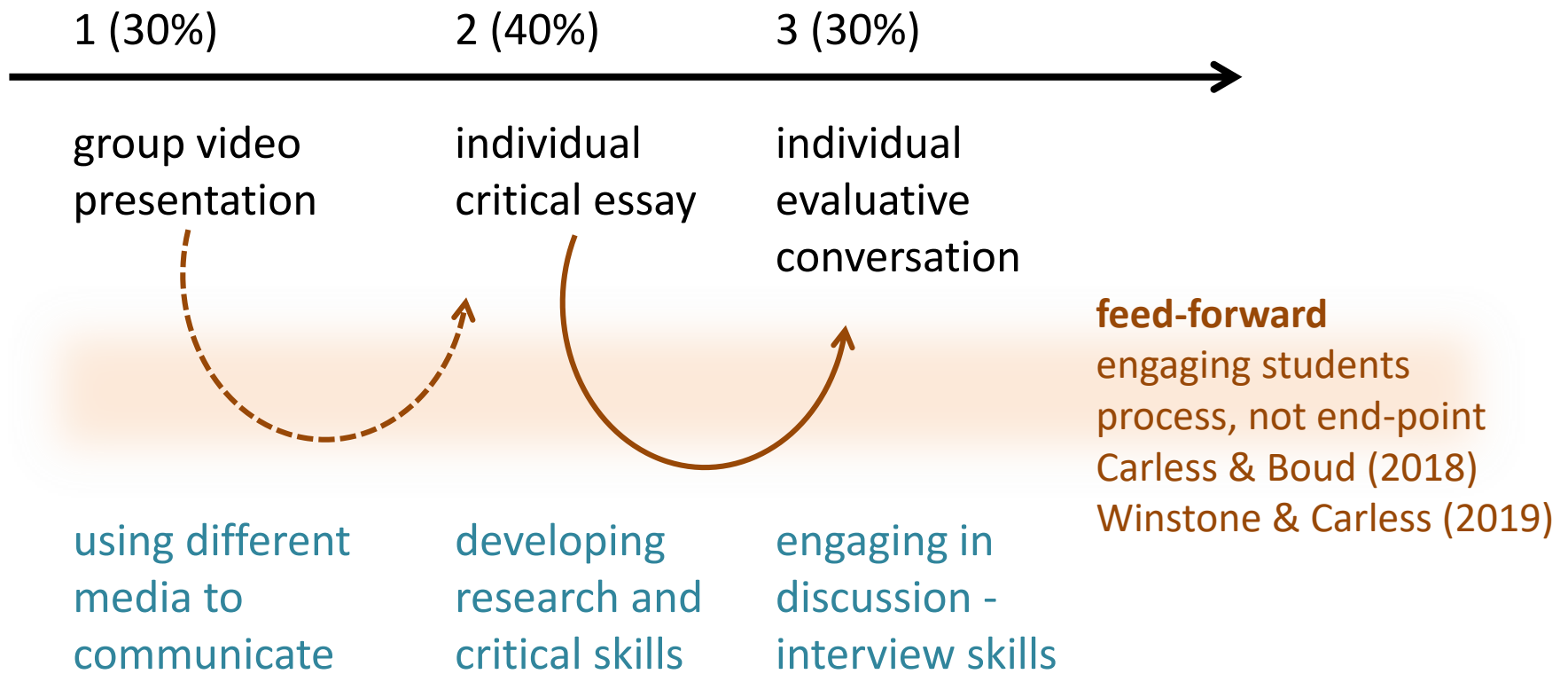
VIVA VOCE ASSESSMENT

When I interview graduates for a job at ONS, I do not look at their technical skills to begin with. I just ask myself: “Can I send this person to go and brief the Prime Minister about the most recent economic statistics in six months from now?”

Jonathan Athow

Deputy National Statistician and Director General,
Economic Statistics at Office for National Statistics
Advisory Board Member, Economics UEA

ASSESSMENT DESIGN



How to do it?

HOW TO DO IT? Video-Presentation

1. Allocate students in groups and let them choose a topic
2. CTEL set group allocation on Blackboard
3. Provide guidelines on free-software (OBS Studio, iMovie)
4. Students create video-presentation or screencast
5. Students upload on eStream and submit the link on Blackboard
6. Videos are marked on Blackboard through rubric and feedback
7. Create a Wiki with all videos on Blackboard for students to share.

HOW TO DO IT? Essay

1. Students choose a topic and discuss it with me
2. Students submit their work on Blackboard in MSWord format
3. Scripts are annotated in MSWord + rubric + mark in Blackboard
4. Final comments include directions for the Evaluative Conversation
 - addressing in-text comments
 - expanding on the issues covered in the essay
 - making a link to another theory/thinker
5. Students receive their feedback and prepare for the conversation.

HOW TO DO IT? Evaluative Conversation

1. Block time-slots in Weeks 13-14
2. Set OneDrive Excel with time-slots, linked to Blackboard
3. Students book their conversation slot, email to confirm
4. Evaluative Conversation: 15-20mins + 10 minutes to write feedback
 - recording on laptop camera and microphone
 - 1st part discussing essay feed-forward, 2nd part on entire syllabus
 - taking notes + quick marking rubric agreed with students
5. End of day: upload videos on eStream and link to Blackboard (mashup tool), add rubric, short feedback, and mark for each student.

HOW TO DO IT? Evaluative Conversation

Making Rubric (simplified senate scale)

- Response to Feedback discussing the essay
- Critical Ability making links across theories
- Flexibility and Responsiveness breadth of knowledge
- Exposition Clarity using appropriate jargon
- Confidence attitude during conversation



RE-FRAMING THE ASSESSMENT SPACE



School of Economics

my office



RE-FRAMING THE ASSESSMENT SPACE



School of Economics
my office, REG 2.09



Evaluation of 2017-18 pilot

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS? 2017-18 data

Feedback on the Evaluative Conversation

62% as challenging as expected

28% more challenging than expected

10% less challenging than expected

Median and Mean Mark = 64



Feedback on Module

57% exactly as expected

15% better than expected

28% worse than expected

WHAT STUDENTS SAY? 2017-18 data

Suggestions to future students

- Do your readings
- Ensure you are truly interested in it
- Communicate with Fabio (he is nice, don't worry)

Oh, are we
already done?

...We need more
assessments like this.

It didn't go well, but now
I know how to do it.

This was the scariest
assessment I ever had.

WHAT DO I THINK?



- Seems a lot of work, but it is no more than setting another essay
- I have fun doing this
- I have chance to see students one by one and adapt to them rather than they to me.

- Presentations are not good enough; exams even worse
- We must train students to discuss and being critical. That is authentic employability.

CURRENT PROJECT 2018-19 data

Pedagogical evaluation

- Mixed-method approach – ethical protocol for action research
- Matched data: student evaluations, orientation to feedback scale, conversation transcripts, demographics, rubrics, marks

Research questions

- Effectiveness of evaluative conversations
- How well students act on feedback received?

Joint work with Dr Naomi Winstone (Surrey)



Research on 2018-19 data

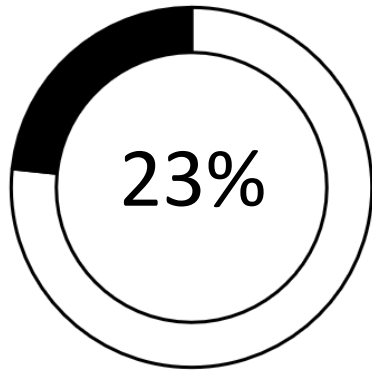
RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

- What are the barriers and the enablers for a successful implementation of viva voce assessment within this setup?
- What are students' perceptions of the viva voce assessment?

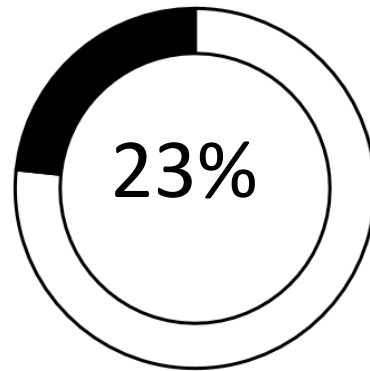
Mixed-method Approach

- demographics
- self-evaluation and module evaluation
- Feedback Orientation Scale (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010)

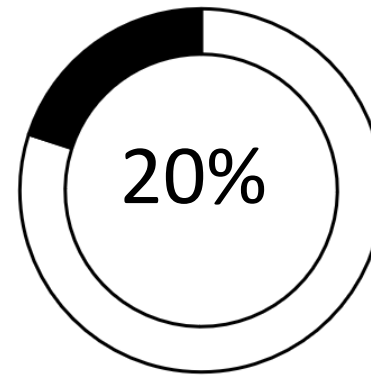
SUMMARY STATISTICS



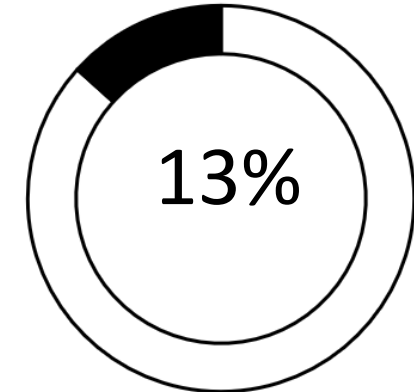
**female
students**



**overseas/EU
students**



**non-native
speakers**



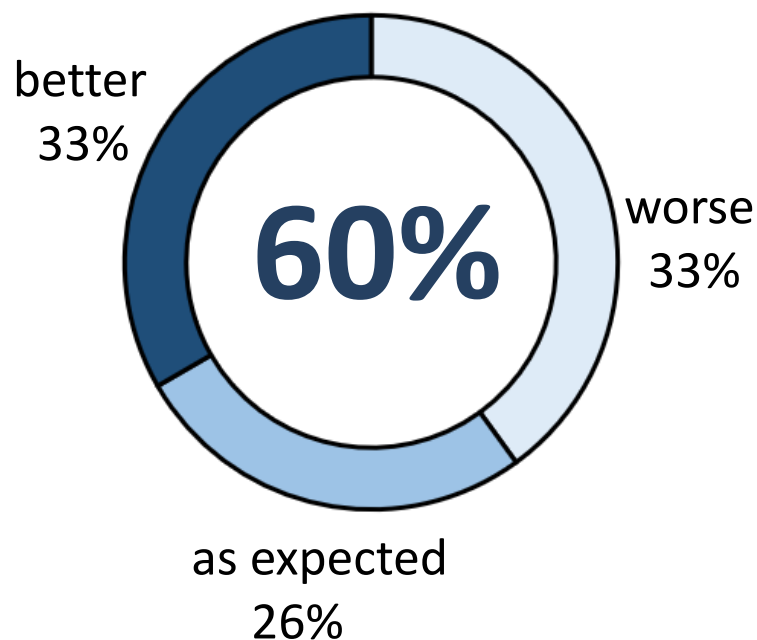
**non-Economics
students**

N=30

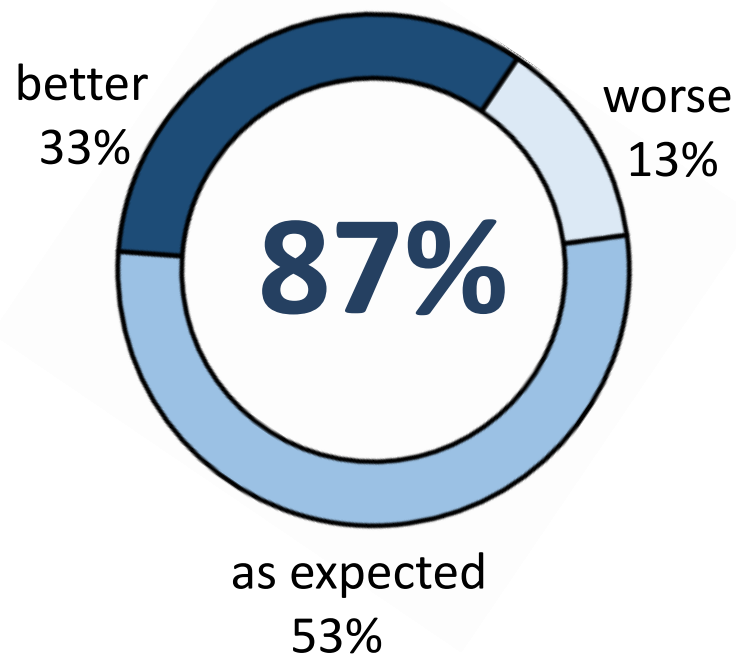
Response Rate = 60%

SUMMARY STATISTICS

Conversation self-evaluation



Module evaluation



THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Students elaborated on the self-evaluation of their viva voce assessment

Themes emerging:

- anxiety/confidence at performing the task → feeling confident/nervous
- student's preparation for the task → studying the syllabus selectively
- challenge generated by the task → timing, accuracy, uncertainty
understanding questions
- support received to face the task → exemplars, feed-forward,
emotional intelligence

COMBINING THE DATA

Self-evaluation	anxiety or confidence	preparation	supportive environment	challenge of the task
worse than expected	2	6	0	2
as expected	3	5	0	4
better than expected	7	3	6	1
sum	12	14	6	7

...If went well, thanks to you – if didn't go well , it was my fault...

QUOTES FROM STUDENTS

The conversation approach helped to trigger memories which I wasn't confident that I had.

I had left my preparation until later than recommended. [?] I was not confident in my ability to perform . Also, I was stressed before beginning but Fabio's relaxed behaviour and casual talk calmed me down.

What I prepared most was not what I was asked about.

I enjoyed the essay writing process as I chose a topic that I found interesting. I also liked the evaluative conversation, as it has improved my ability to take criticism and respond to it.

It was harder than I expected because you asked a lot of stuff outside the essay feedback.

I really enjoyed having a follow-up assessment on the critical essay. It gave more meaning to both the essay the EC, as opposed to the usual dumping of concern/knowledge following a submission.

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