

## **Check-ins support students to showcase their learning and mistakes**

### **AIF (Activating Identities & Futures)**

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Research Project (RP) is taught in Year 11/12 due to the large cohort numbers. Although some students don't complete the subject for several reasons, generally, it garners good results. However, the typical response to RP is a lack of enthusiasm and that they 'just need to get it done' to complete SACE, which made teaching it hard work and transactional.

In addition to the traditional assessment formats, students who have trouble engaging with RP are given the option to produce assignments in audio formats. However, a stigma is attached to this, despite a range of students using this option.

The format for RP is very prescribed, and despite various delivery options, most students elect to complete the safest-feeling format rather than one that best showcased their skills.

So engaging Activating Identities and Futures (AIF) saw a significant change in delivering and assessing the AIF project. Through this format, students were able to reveal their thinking, judgements and progress in a timely and authentic manner.

Excitedly, the teachers saw this as an opportunity to change the approach and shift the way assessment is carried out.

It offered more opportunities for rewarding risks, especially in the way the evidence was assessed, experimentation with the different assessment formats, which they hoped students would engage more with and support successful outcomes.

Rather than the evidence being captured in a formal portfolio, the students opted for show-and-tell style conversational check-ins throughout the duration of their projects in addition to other self-documented work. This enabled all students the equal opportunity to complete the subject.

Having check-ins meant multiple opportunities for the students to showcase their learning and mistakes along the way. It also enabled students to show their progression. The successful show-and-tell format also enabled all students the chance to share and show deeper-level learning via ongoing student-teacher discussions.

This approach allowed students to elaborate and clarify in the moment, revealing their thinking, whilst teachers collected authentic and organic student reflections. Despite initial worry from students about new approaches in a new subject, they became more comfortable in the process.

Moreover, it was noted through the exit survey that there was a shift in the students' attitude, communication skills and speaking confidence. Students identified it was an advantage to show evidence of their learning this way as they could correct mistakes in the moment, the pressure to be perfect was eliminated, and they could help their teacher to understand their progress better because they communicated their judgements more clearly.

From a time-management perspective, they valued showing evidence orally as opposed to writing it up, and the preparation and organisation of materials were more efficient. Students who reported that they initially would have chosen to document their learning progress in written or video formats also found conversations beneficial and demonstrated deeper levels of understanding.

Overall, most students valued the experience and were successful in their projects, stating that they noticed a growth in confidence, independence and agency.

Teachers noticed an astounding difference in the project outputs and change in students. In comparison to RP, AIF students demonstrated greater creativity and authenticity in their choice of learning outputs, which resulted in higher levels of engagement.

The teachers' relationships with the students improved as they had opportunities to celebrate successes, with students affirming how the teacher was helping them to succeed rather than talking at them.

The teachers have gained a lot from this pilot and are excited to guide all students through this process and can visualise the strength of this subject in their school. Through surveys and self-directed evaluation, they are building a bank of discussion points to match the differing student entry point levels.

Once completely familiar with the assessment criteria, the teachers expect it will reduce their marking and workload, particularly as they hand the students the reins as each student takes agency.