

Dying for Authenticity

Facilitating Excellence from
Classroom to Clinical Practice
(in Paramedic Education)

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University of Portsmouth

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A student can pass every assessment and still struggle in practice.



Why?



What are we
actually
measuring?



What does
“authentic”
really mean?







Authentic Teaching

Authentic Learning

Authentic Assessment

**Authentic Graduate
Practice**



**THE
AUTHENTICITY
CONTINUUM**

Authentic Teaching

Maintain a clear industry link

Design learning that reflects the realities of practice

Constructivist & active learning principles

Students build understanding through realistic, practice-oriented context



REMEMBER:
Context is key!

Authentic vs Inauthentic Teaching

Inauthentic

Textbook-perfect presentations

- ✗ Linear scenarios
- ✗ Recall-heavy teaching
- ✗ Silent classrooms
- ✗ Ideal conditions

Authentic

Real ambiguity

- ✓ Dynamic
- ✓ Decision-heavy teaching
- ✓ Inclusive and collaborative
- ✓ Awareness of cognitive bandwidth

Authentic Learning

Learning must mirror the cognitive demands of practice.

Learners should be encouraged to construct understanding rather than recall information.

Uncertainty

Pressure

Prioritisation

Communication

Judgement

Human Factors

Context & Reflection



REMEMBER:

We don't just deliver content;
We develop thinking.

Authentic Assessment

Are we assessing capability?

Are we assessing compliance?

Are we assessing recall?

Are we assessing performance
theatre?

**Are we assessing
authentically?**



REMEMBER:

Authentic assessment depends on
authentic learning!

Authentic Graduate Outcomes

What do we want graduates to become?

Not just students who pass assessments.

Adaptive professionals
Critical thinkers
Effective collaborators
Confident decision-makers
Reflective practitioners
Resilient communicators



REMEMBER:

Authenticity is not realism for the sake of it. It is about preparing future professionals for the reality of responsibility

Key Transferable Strategies for Authentic Learning

Small design shifts. Big impact.

1



Build Context Into Learning

Make content meaningful by situating it in real-world contexts and authentic constraints.

Try:

Use real cases, problems, datasets, and realistic tasks.

2



Assess Decision-Making, Not Just Recall

Focus on students' ability to reason, justify, and prioritise—not just reproduce information.

Try:

Ask students to explain their reasoning and trade-offs.

3



Introduce Productive Ambiguity

Design activities with uncertainty, incomplete information, and competing priorities.

Try:

Use evolving scenarios and open-ended questions.

4



Make Learning Social

Leverage the power of collaboration, peer challenge, and collective problem-solving.

Try:

Build structured opportunities for discussion and teamwork.

5



Debrief Thinking Processes

Go beyond outcomes to explore the thinking, assumptions, emotions, and communication behind decisions.

Try:

Use targeted debrief questions that surface cognitive processes.

6



Use Authentic Constraints

Add real-world constraints such as time pressure, limited resources, and interruptions.

Try:

Introduce realistic limits or competing demands.

7



Align Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Ensure alignment so students experience consistency between how they learn and how they are assessed.

Try:

Design backwards from real-world outcomes.

8



Reduce Performance Scripting

Avoid over-rehearsed responses and predictable scenarios that reward performance over understanding.

Try:

Use varied scenarios and value original thinking.

9



Allow Use of Real-World Resources

Professionals use resources. Teach students to access, evaluate, and apply them effectively.

Try:

Use open-book tasks and authentic tools.

10



Design for Adaptability

Prepare students to navigate change, complexity, and the unknown—not just familiar situations.

Try:

Challenge students to adapt their knowledge in new ways.



Authenticity is a continuum, not a checkbox.

Different activities can be authentic in different ways.

The goal is alignment with the cognitive, social, and professional demands of real practice.



No single method is always authentic.

The right approach depends on your goals, learners, and context.

Takeaways

(Too many choices!)



Industry Link

**Does my teaching
reflect the ever-
evolving professional
industry?**

1

Authentic Assessment

**Do my assessments
evaluate the outcomes
they intend to, based on
ATL?**

2

Graduate Outcomes

**Am I holistically preparing
my students with the skills,
knowledge and
professional attitudes
required of them (not just
knowledge)?**

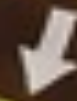
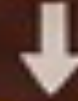
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