Case Study Title	**Building assessment literacy through guided analysis of coursework tasks: Using the Time and Effort on Task template with second year psychology students**
Institution	**The University of the West of Scotland**
Authors	Dr Anna Law, Dr Kallia Manoussaki, Dr Laurie Walden & Dr Christina Magkoufopoulou
Researchers	Dr Anna Law, Dr Kallia Manoussaki & Dr Laurie Walden
Course information	The participants were second year undergraduate Psychology students. The were taught in face-to-face workshops of around 20 students.
Assessment information	The assessment task was a research report. Students took part in a small-scale psychology experiment and were then provided with a combined data set. Their task was to analyse the data independently and write up a report in the format of a journal article using APA style (Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, References).
Aim of the case study	To assess the value of the Time and Effort on Task (TET) Toolkit when presented in an active workshop setting. Working with teachers, psychology students in second year produced an action plan for an assessment task using the TET student planning template.
Research questions	1) Do we observe an increase in self-reported confidence for the assessment task, after using the Time and Effort on Task student template? 2) What are students' perceptions of the template, after using it to plan for an assessment task?
Institutional Ethics Approval Code	Education & Social Sciences: 2025-24033-19066

How to cite this case study:

Law, A. S., Manoussaki, K., Walden, L., & Magkoufopoulou, C (2026). *Case Study Report: Building assessment literacy through guided analysis of coursework tasks: Using the Time and Effort on Task template with second year psychology students*. . QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project: Enhancing assessment literacy: balancing staff expectations with students' effort and time [https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/benefits-of-qaa-membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/assessment/enhancing-assessment-literacy-balancing-staff-expectations-with-students-effort-and-time]

Contents

Rationale

This pilot study of the implementation of the Time and Effort on Task (TET) Toolkit took place within a 20-credit second-year psychology module, focused on the research report assessment task (also sometimes known as a lab or experimental report). In Scotland, honours degrees are four-year courses. While most students on this module had also completed first year at university, a minority had articulated into second year from college and were still becoming acclimatised to university assessment practices. Although students would have had some experience of writing research reports, this was the first one on the degree programme where students were asked to conduct and report inferential statistical tests, which tends to be a source of anxiety for psychology students (Bourne et al., 2024; McDonald & Barnard, 2023). The completion of a research report is a complex and multi-step authentic assessment task that develops scientific literacy and employability skills (McDonald & Parkin, 2025; Serbic & Bourne, 2020). For example, data analysis and presentation is a key skill set for research and policy jobs within government, academia, or third-sector organisations. In the shorter term, completing a series of research reports throughout the undergraduate degree readies students for their final year Dissertation project (Quality Assurance Agency, 2023). It was therefore a suitable assessment task for an evaluation of the TET Toolkit, which was introduced to students during an assessment support workshop, providing opportunities for active learning.

Methodology

Design

The pilot study utilised a pre-test, post-test design where participants were surveyed before and after using the TET toolkit during a taught workshop session. The questions for these surveys can be seen in Appendix 1. Data were gathered anonymously and online.

Participants

Participants were second year psychology students, 39 of whom consented to the study and provided demographic data. There were 30 women, 8 men, and 1 participant who did not disclose their gender. The percentage of participants in each age category is shown in Table 1. The sample was also mostly comprised of commuter students (89.7%), most of whom were in part time (64.1%) or full time (10.3%) employment, and 20.5% of whom had parental or caring responsibilities. Some of the students were direct entrants to second year (20.5%), although 84.6% of the sample reported that they had completed a research report prior to the current module.

Table 1: Percentage of participants in each age category	
Age category	**Percent of sample**
18-21 years	59.0%
22-30 years	20.5%
31-40 years	12.8%
41-50 years	5.1%
Did not disclose	2.6%

Procedure

Introducing the Toolkit to Students

The module co-ordinator/lead researcher gave a brief overview of the toolkit template to students during the lecture that also introduced the research report coursework. Following this, both tutors introduced the template more fully within a workshop setting. In the workshop the tutors used a common set of slides, and they met in advance to discuss how to manage delivery. After talking through the slides, they tasked students to complete the template individually based on their own prior experience and self-knowledge, reassuring them that there was no 'right answer'. Tutors circulated amongst the class to provide guidance and answer questions, encouraging students to make judgements about the time and effort involved in the assessment task. Students were provided with a choice of either digital or hard copies of the template (with most students choosing a hard copy). At the end of the session, tutors explained to students that they should continue to use the template to assist with their coursework completion throughout the term, updating the content as necessary. A partially completed version of the template was released to students via the virtual learning environment (see Appendix 2). This showed the module co-ordinator's estimation of how the coursework tasks could be broken down into sub-steps and information about where help could be found. Students were also reminded about the template via the virtual learning environment about a month after the workshop, and also in another coursework-support class that took place before the hand-in deadline at the end of the term.

Data Collection

This study collected anonymous, online student data in the form of closed ratings and open questions before and after using the toolkit (from students consenting to contribute their data). In the workshop, students were asked to complete some questions before and after using the toolkit as a class exercise. They accessed the online questionnaire (hosted on QuestionPro software) on their personal devices by means of a QR code displayed on the screen. Consent questions asked explicitly if they

were willing, or not willing, to contribute their data to the research project. If they did not consent, their data was discarded and is not included below. In the first survey they were asked to create an anonymous codeword, and then to enter it again in the second survey. This provided a means to link the 'before' and 'after' data.

The questions for the 'before' questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix 1. The four questions asking them to rate their levels of confidence for various aspects of the assessment were summed to form a total confidence scale (α = 0.86) which was used as the measure of self-confidence before the intervention, with higher scores indicating greater confidence. Participants also answered a series of demographic questions in the 'before' questionnaire. In the 'after' questionnaire, the same set of four self-reflection questions about coursework confidence was repeated, and once again combined to create a total score which showed high reliability (α = 0.85). The 'after' questionnaire also asked a series of closed and open questions directly evaluating the planning template.

Consideration of ethical issues

Given that the students were in a dependent relationship with the researcher (BPS Code of Human Research Ethics), caution was exercised to minimise the risk that students felt coerced to contribute their data to the study. This was done by keeping the data fully anonymous and collecting it via personal devices, so that the tutors could not observe who did or did not consent. Students were assured verbally and in writing that they could choose to contribute or not contribute their data.

It must also be recognised that the students in this pilot study were relatively new to higher education – indeed, some were direct entrants to second year in their first term at university. They were therefore inexperienced in completing research reports and using inferential statistics. These factors underpinned the choice of anonymous questionnaires as the method of gathering data.

Findings

Quantitative Data

In the survey completed before the introduction of the toolkit, 30 participants completed all of the first set of questions about coursework confidence. Their average confidence was 27.57 (SD= 5.86) from a possible maximum of 40 and minimum of 4. For the 'after' survey, 21 participants completed all the questions about coursework confidence (M = 29.90, SD = 5.38), but of these only 18 could be linked to the 'before' data using the anonymous codeword they provided. For these 18 participants, the 'before' mean (M = 27.89, SD = 5.50) and 'after' mean (M = 30.39, SD = 5.48) was similar to those observed in the whole sample. A paired samples t-test showed a significant

increase in confidence after the toolkit intervention with a large effect size, $t(17) = -3.33$, $p = .004$, $d = .79$ (see Figure 1).

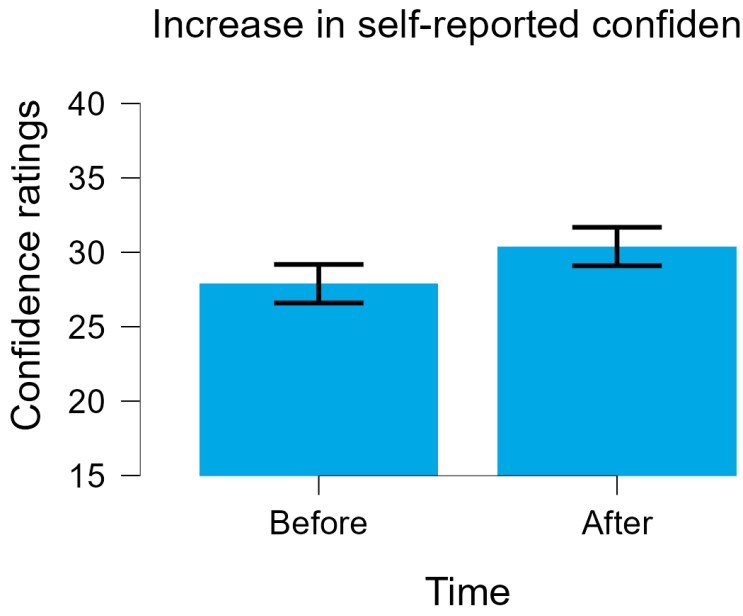

Figure 1: Coursework confidence ratings provided before and after using the Time and Effort on Task student planning template

In the survey completed after using the toolkit, 96.4% of respondents agreed that they could use the Toolkit in future coursework tasks. When 28 participants rated the Toolkit's usefulness on a scale of 1-5, the most popular response was a 4 (57% of respondents), with another 25% choosing a 3, 14.3% participants choosing 2, and 3.6% giving it a 5 (invaluable).

Qualitative data

A descriptive thematic analysis was applied to the open-ended responses (N = 26). Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the biggest benefits and applications of the toolkit were:

1) The ability to set personal deadlines for tasks
2) Identify and reflect on previous skills
3) Provides a simple layout to breakdown steps and track progress

These students focused on the organisational benefits of the toolkit.

> *"Reflecting on skills that I already have plus things I need to work on and signposting where the help is"*

> *"Organizing your time, and order of events"*

A few students mentioned the ability to reflect on what they already knew, which helped build their confidence.

> *"Helps identify my existing skills which builds my confidence"*
>
> *"Reflecting on skills that I already have"*
>
> *"Listing where I can find things and remind myself I have done it before"*

Suggestions for further development of the toolkit included

1) Simplifying the wording
2) Checking for repetition between steps
3) Reducing the number of questions in Step 1
4) Adding a calendar feature
5) Providing links to resources such as course materials, a user guide, and a link to the library

Some of these suggestions about Step 1 are similar to what the first-year students said about improving the toolkit in a separate pilot study of the TET Toolkit (Law & Walden, 2026).

> *"less repeating sentences"*
>
> *"less questions in the first step"*

Students were asked what resources they would like to see added to the toolkit. All responses were about course materials: PowerPoints, readings, and links to the virtual learning environment. Unlike the first year students, none of the second year students requested worked examples.

Discussion and Reflection

The current study used the student planning template from the TET Toolkit as a brief intervention within a workshop setting, directed at a particular piece of coursework. Self-reported confidence for this assessment task did increase after using the toolkit, answering our first research question. Although this increase had a large effect size, we must recognise that it will be partly fuelled by demand characteristics of the workshop setting, and some desire on the part of the student participants to please their tutor. However, the direct evaluations of the toolkit, collected to address our second research question, provide additional insights into the utility of the planning template.

The template was rated positively by most students in the workshop, almost all of whom said that they could use it in future coursework tasks. Their additional comments suggested that they perceived it to be useful for breaking down the task, planning their time, and reflecting on their prior skills and experience. Their general endorsement was

not without caveat, however, with few students awarding the highest usefulness rating, and numerous suggestions for improvement put forward. Some of these related to the way the template was presented within the session (e.g., some students wanted more written rather than verbal guidance) while other suggestions related to the format and design of the template.

One design issue raised within the commentary was that Step 1 was lengthy, and there was a sense of repetitiveness (likely because of the 'where can I find help' columns in both Step 1 and Step 2). Step 1 mainly aims to help students identify their pre-existing knowledge and skills, while Step 2 is mainly aiming to help students identify the newly developed skills and acquired knowledge as part of this assessment task. It may be helpful for the tutor to explicitly draw this distinction when the template is introduced. The self-reflection questions in Step 1 are an opportunity for students to recognise the areas where they may require help, and engage in discussions with their peers and tutors to signpost them to the right resources. The tutors delivering the session observed that some students spent a long time on Step 1, and some seemed to become 'stuck' at this stage, especially if they struggled to think of an example of their knowledge and skills in a particular category. This kind of self-reflection can be a challenge for students, who may struggle to articulate their transferrable skills (Hill et al., 2022). The exercise of doing this is a useful one, but in a workshop with limited time, it is advisable to encourage students to move on to Step 2 during the workshop, so that they can work on breaking down the assessment task while they have their tutor at hand to answer questions.

It was also noted by the tutors that a very small number of students connected a sense of overwhelm at completing the template to their neurodivergence. It is recommended that students are encouraged to think of the template as a resource that they can return to and update after the workshop and indeed throughout the term, rather than a 'one shot' planning task that needs to be finished within the timeframe of the workshop. They should be reassured that they do not necessarily need to complete every box on the template.

Another observation was that overall engagement with the template was lower than in workshops run with first year students (Law & Walden, 2026). In the first-year workshops, almost everybody engaged seriously in an attempt to complete the template. In the second-year workshops, there was a small but significant minority who made little attempt, and there was a general lack of questions from the class during the exercise. This may be due to a greater overall sense of confidence (potentially, overconfidence) among second year students that they already knew what they were doing (Money et al., 2017). This sense of confidence may also be seen by the lack of request for worked examples in the survey data.

In this module the students were given a worked example after the session (see Appendix 2) which was released to all students via the virtual learning environment so that students received it whether they attended the workshop or not. It was a partially completed version with sources of help and support identified, alongside a suggested breakdown of tasks, but with the time, effort, and deadline estimations left blank for students to make their personal and independent judgments on these matters. Alongside the other assessment-related documents on the module, this provided students with guidance on how to work independently on the report coursework. The tutors noted that few questions were received from during the term, but the assessment was nevertheless completed very successfully. The pass rate from submitted work rose to 94% (up by 6%) compared with the main assessment diet in previous year, while the mean mark rose by 2%. While these results are due to many different factors, the TET planning template may have played a role in demystifying the steps involved in completing the assessment task, and helping students come to an earlier realisation of the likely time those steps would take.

Conclusions

This pilot study provided good support for the use of the TET student planning template as an intervention within an assessment support workshop. Although a minority of students chose not to engage with it, it was observed that across the class as a whole, self-reported confidence for the assessment task increased after using the toolkit, and student commentary was generally positive.

References

British Psychological Society. (2021). Code of Human Research Ethics. BPS Code of Human Research Ethics | BPS

Bourne, V. J., Clarke, P. L., Felton, A., Iliopoulou, M., & Maksimenko, O. (2024). Exploring statistics anxiety and self-efficacy in psychology undergraduate students. *Psychology Teaching Review, 30* (2), 17-27. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsptr.2024.30.2.17

Hill, M. A., Overton, T., Kitson, R. R., Thompson, C. D., Brookes, R. H., Coppo, P., & Bayley, L. (2022). 'They help us realise what we're actually gaining': The impact on undergraduates and teaching staff of displaying transferable skills badges. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *23*(1), 17-34. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787419898023

Law, A. S., Walden, L., & Magkoufopoulou C (2026). *Case Study Report: Building assessment literacy through guided analysis of coursework tasks: Using the Time and Effort on Task template with first year undergraduates at a Scottish University*. QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project: Enhancing assessment literacy: balancing staff expectations with students' effort and time

[https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/benefits-of-qaa-membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/assessment/enhancing-assessment-literacy-balancing-staff-expectations-with-students-effort-and-time]

McDonald, S., & Barnard, M. (2023). The influence of prior experience with mathematics and A-Level science subjects on statistics anxiety in undergraduate psychology students. *Psychology Teaching Review, 29* (1), 37-50. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsptr.2023.29.1.37

McDonald, S., & Parkin, L. (2025). Embedding employability in the psychology undergraduate research project through a framework of authentic assessment and training support. *Psychology Teaching Review, 31* (1), 20-32. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsptr.2025.31.1.33

Money, J., Nixon, S., Tracy, S., Hennessy, C., Ball, E., & Dinning, T. (2017) Undergraduate student expectations of university in the United Kingdom: What really matters to them?, *Cogent Education, 4*(1), 1301855.

Quality Assurance Agency. (2023). Subject Benchmark Statement: Psychology. Subject Benchmark Statement - Psychology

Serbic, D., & Bourne, V. (2020). Final year research project as a tool for maximising students' employability prospects. *Psychology Teaching Review, 26* (1), 90-95. https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsptr.2020.26.1.90

Appendix 1: Survey items

Self-reflection questions

- Have you ever written a research report before? (Yes/No)
- Given your previous knowledge, skills, and experience, how well prepared to you feel for this coursework project? (Ratings scale 1-10)
- How confident do you feel that you understand all the sub-steps involved in completing the coursework project? (Rating scale 1-10)
- How confident do you feel about being able to find information and seek help during this coursework project? (Rating scale 1-10)
- Please rate your overall level of confidence about being able to complete this coursework task successfully (i.e., achieving a mark you would be happy with)? (Rating scale 1-10)

Demographics (questions that allow a basic description of the class profile, or that relate to university experience or how time is spent)

- Age range:
    - Prefer not to say
    - 18 - 21
    - 22 – 30
    - 31 – 40
    - 41 – 50
    - 51 – 60
    - 60 +
- Are you a direct entrant to second year?
    - Yes
    - No, I completed first year at UWS (or another university)
- Do you commute for your course?
    - Yes (new follow-up question)
    - No (move to question after)
- How long is the commute for?
    - Less than 30 minutes
    - 30-60 minutes
    - 1 – 2 hours
    - More than 2 hours
- Please select any additional responsibilities in addition to being a student that apply to you:
    - Full-time employment
    - Part-time employment

    - Caring responsibilities
    - Other (please specify if you wish):
- Gender:
    - Prefer not to say
    - Male
    - Female
    - Non-binary
    - Prefer to self-identify: _____ (Specify if you wish)

<u>After using the toolkit (end of session)</u>

Please enter the codeword you used in the first questionnaire, to allow us to match up your data (free text)

Repeat of initial self-reflection questions (see above)

Direct evaluation of template (mirroring questions from a previous survey in a separate study)

- Having used the Time and Effort on Task template, how useful do you think the tool is?
    - Scale 1 (not useful at all) – 5 (invaluable)
- What do you see as the key benefit of this tool? *(free text)*
- Could you apply this tool for your future coursework tasks?
    - Yes (please explain how)
    - No (please explain why not)
- How could this tool be further developed? *(free text)*
- What types of resources or materials related to the assessment tool would be especially useful for students? *(free text)*

Appendix 2: Partially completed student template released after the session

Step 1: Establishing your relevant knowledge and skills		
Knowledge and skills	**List all relevant items**	**Where can I find help with this? –** *consider options from previous modules, or university-wide services.*
Have I completed similar assessments before? *(Consider format e.g., essay/presentation and topic at any course/level)*		**Help with report format can be found in the Assessment Briefing document on the 'Research Report Info' page, and seminar slides from Week 7**
What knowledge from the course might help me complete this task? *(Consider links with other modules too)*		**Critical thinking & research evaluation from the Essential Skills for Psychology module** **Data analysis & JASP skills from the Quantitative Research Skills in Psychology module** **UWS Psychology Microsoft Sway site on t-tests**
What knowledge from outside the course might help me complete this task? *(Consider any real-world relevance or applications of the topic)*		**Could ask a friend or family member to proof-read the final version**
What academic skills do I already have that can help me? *(e.g., literature searching, data analysis, or referencing)*		**The UWS Academic Skills Team: Academic Skills** **The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): Welcome to the Purdue Online Writing Lab - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University**
What academic skills do I need to develop that can help me? *(e.g., literature searching, data analysis, or referencing)*		**The UWS Academic Skills Team: Academic Skills** **The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): Welcome to the Purdue Online Writing Lab - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University**
Have I gained skills outside university that are relevant?		**The UWS Careers Service: University of the West of Scotland**

(e.g., work/hobbies can build skills in teamwork & time management)		
Is there specific software, equipment or tools/resources I need to complete this task, and do I know how to use them?		**Microsoft Word** **JASP statistical software**

Step 2: Breaking down of task into sub steps *(Feel free to add or remove as many steps as necessary)*					
Step	**Description**	**Estimate your likely Time-on-Task using a flexible range** *(e.g., 4-6 hours)*	**Estimate how much mental effort is needed** *(e.g., high, moderate, low)*	**Target date for completion** *(consider workload on other modules)*	**Where can I find help with this step?** **(***consider options from previous modules, or university-wide services)*
1	Read assessment brief, 'What matters', and 'Report Overview Final' documents on [Virtual Learning Environment]				**Research Report Info** [Virtual Learning Environment] page
2	Find and download the starter references in the 'Report Overview' document				
3	Read the starter references, and take notes using a reading grid				See seminar slides from **Week 7** for example reading grid
4	Conduct a literature search using key terms derived from reading the starter references, and the lecture on the social influence topic				Library guidance on literature searching: Welcome - How to search - Library Guides at University of the West of Scotland

5	Read the articles/books you sourced independently, and add notes to the reading grid				See the guidance on reading and critiquing literature on the Essential Skills for Psychology module
6	Plan paragraph structure of Introduction, think about the argument you want to make, and formulate your hypothesis.				**Seminar slides from Week 7**
7	Draft your Introduction Section				
8	Draft the Method section, including reporting information on Participants from the data set (please note, this step could be completed earlier if preferred)				Use the information about the study and the data file on the **Research Report Info** [VLE] page
9	Analyse the data and consider the implications of your findings for the hypothesis – is it supported or not?				Quantitative Skills module **UWS Psychology Microsoft Sway site on t-tests** **Seminar slides from Week 7**
10	Draft the Results Section				
11	Draft the Discussion Section				**Seminar slides from Week 7**
12	Draft the Abstract and Title				
13	Compile the reference list (unless you have done this as you went along)				Purdue OWL APA 7th Referencing Guide

13	Read-over and re-draft the work to improve flow and coherence, correct any errors. Check it against the marking criteria.				Marking criteria are in the 'What matters' document on the **Research Report Info** [VLE] page
14	Proof-read				It can help to ask someone else (not from the course) to proofread as well.
15	Submit the work to Turnitin and check similarity report				Guidance on interpreting similarity report
16	Re-draft any areas with concerning similarity flags, and re-submit				N/A
Total					

Step 3: Final checks for maximising success		
Item	**Yes/ No**	**Further comments**
Review the assessment brief. Are the steps above covering the whole task? *(Have I missed anything?)*		Assessment Brief can be found on [the Virtual Learning Environment]
Review the marking criteria. Will the steps above help me to meet all of them? *(Could I do more to maximise my grade?)*		Detailed marking criteria can be found in the What Matters document
Is the total estimated amount of time realistic?		Review assessment briefs on other modules

*(Consider how much of the module **this** assessment is worth – e.g., 100%, 50%, 30%? Consider coursework demands on other modules)*		
Do I understand what skills and knowledge will be developed by this assessment task, to support future success on the course? *(Make a list)*		You will write research reports in both Cognitive and Biological Psychology modules in third year. Your final year Dissertation project is also a research report, but longer.

This case study is an output from a Collaborative Enhancement Project supported and funded by QAA membership. The project is led by Coventry University in partnership with Aston University, International University of Applied Sciences, Germany, University of the West of Scotland, and University of West London. Find out more about Collaborative Enhancement Projects on the QAA website.