

## Oral Exam Checklist for Bias Aware Assessment – 16 check-ins

### During the course

1. Be aware of your cognitive and personal biases towards different students, student behavior, favored learning outcomes, course content. Check out the [cognitive bias cheat sheet and codex](#).
2. Be explicit, ensure students know what to expect during the exam: the exam structure, content, learning outcomes and your approach. Share these with the students in good time to inform their preparation.
3. Address anxieties, make time for students to share their anxieties, reassure them and provide strategies.
4. Practice the oral exam technique in class or online – provide indicative questions to triads of students in role as student, examiner and observer. Return to whole group and discuss questions and responses.
5. Decide which learning outcomes you will assess during the exam, decide if you will share them with the students.
6. Prepare Oral Exam questions which are directly linked with the learning outcomes and which offer students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge/understanding/skills/competencies across the full grade scale. Providing or co-constructing a Rubric with oral exam questions can provide a helpful scaffolded list.

### Preparing for the Oral Exam

7. Prepare yourself and the censor for the oral exam – make sure you know how you will manage the questioning.
8. Review any biases you know you have towards individual students or student behavior, favored learning outcomes, course content.
9. Prepare your welcome and introduction to the exam and share this with every student.

### During the Oral Exam

10. Welcome the student and tell them the purpose of this exam is to give them a fair opportunity to show their learning at the highest possible grade/level.
11. Adopt positive and encouraging body language, tone of voice, choice of language – keep it clear and unambiguous.
12. Choose an accessible opening question which will put students at ease, e.g. “What would you say is your most important learning achievement during the course?” “What would you say is your most significant learning from your group project/report/thesis?” Let the students know you will open with this question.
13. Draw from your list of pre-prepared questions, ensure the censor has a copy.
14. Stop and move on, avoid wasting time with over-long answers and re-phrase or move when a student gets stuck. Give all students the opportunity to show how much they know/understand/can apply/analyze/evaluate... Alternatively, if a student does not demonstrate secure knowledge, rephrase the question and if necessary, ask a related question from the lower grade category. Calm a student’s insecurity and nerves. “Let’s leave that question and try another...” Come back to an unanswered question if confirming a grade is contingent on it.

### Deciding on the Exam Outcome and Grade

15. Review the list of questions you asked and note confirmed grades for each. Ask yourself, what did you do to ensure this student had a fair opportunity to show their learning at the highest possible grade/level. Decide on final grade. If you and the censor disagree over a borderline grade, confirm the higher grade.
16. Plan and give feedback which includes how well the student’s answers matched the criteria for the confirmed grade, what you would recommend they work on to achieve deeper learning and to improve their oral exam technique.

Benson, B. Cognitive Bias Codex. Available at: <https://busterbenson.com/piles/cognitive-biases/>

Checklist: Donna Hurford [dhu@sdu.dk](mailto:dhu@sdu.dk), Lisbeth Bjerrum Jensen [lisbj@sdu.dk](mailto:lisbj@sdu.dk), Peter Bjelskou [bjelskou@sdu.dk](mailto:bjelskou@sdu.dk)