

INTERACTIVE ORAL

Explain. Apply. Respond.

A conversation that probes understanding

An interactive oral is a structured conversation in which students explain, apply or justify their understanding, often using their own work or a professional scenario. Assessors use follow-up questions to explore reasoning rather than relying on a prepared response. It contributes evidence about why a student made a decision, how they apply an idea and how they respond when a condition changes. A short oral samples a limited performance, so decide what other evidence the judgement needs.

It is the most-documented approach in the registry: 44 of 114 instances involve an oral, 26 of them as the sole approach.

What would a conversation add - and what would it replace?

Three documented practice accounts, with implementation details and limits.

01 / ORGANISE

Teacher education / 524 students / Face-to-face

Newcastle: build the whole appointment

What they did: A six-minute final oral asks students to apply educational psychology to practice, with two sides of A4 notes permitted.

What it takes: Fifteen-minute slots cover ID and adjustment checks, recording consent, the conversation, marking and wrap-up. Rooms, bookings and disability adjustments need coordination; the coordinator contacts the access service proactively rather than waiting for disclosure.

Limits: The account documents delivery at 524 students; it does not quantify total staff workload or evaluate marking consistency.

[Review Newcastle's Assessment Framework Toolkit for Large Cohort Interactive Orals](#)

02 / INTEGRATE

Postgraduate teacher education / 230 students / July 2025 account

Queensland: redesign the surrounding assessment

What they did: Ten-minute conversations centred on the student's own lesson plan. The authors report a mismatch between some students' written and oral performance, and describe plans to remove some written assessment and redesign the course, with accreditation implications.

What it takes: Three weeks of room holds, booking systems, recording storage and professional-staff support. Missed appointments exposed gaps in deferral policy; feedback needed separate planning.

Limits: Educator reflections, not a study of judgement accuracy. That written and oral performance diverged shows the two formats sample different things; it does not establish which better represents capability. The redesign was planned, not evaluated.

[Read Queensland's account of bookings and deferrals](#)

03 / APPLY

Information governance / Under 50 students / Hybrid unit

Curtin: use a professional scenario

What they did: Students present an organisational analysis as recordkeeping specialists; academic staff act as line managers.

What it takes: Ten minutes of dialogue, five of debrief and fifteen of marking. Suggested anxiety supports include letting students choose the organisation and bring material they can refer to during the conversation.

Limits: Thirty minutes per student is the published allocation. Feasibility at larger scale and the anxiety adaptations are not evaluated.

[Explore Curtin's set-up, progression, submission and suggested marking criteria](#)

FROM THE SCAN

Workload depends on the arrangement. Some accounts report examining time comparable with written marking (Sydney, across four units). Others describe substantial scheduling and follow-up work (Queensland, Newcastle). Compare the whole appointment, assessor numbers and administration, not conversation length alone.

Consistency needs attention alongside feasibility. A Melbourne symposium abstract reports examiner-linked variation persisting through redesign; no full analysis is published. Seven registry instances describe double marking or moderation. Adopting those measures does not establish their effect.

Make the decision in your context

Four choices to resolve before changing an assessment. Each ends with one move and one case to open.

01 / PURPOSE

Name the capability

Is speaking itself part of the capability, or a way to explore it? Decide what the oral adds to existing evidence and which task or activity it replaces. Queensland plans to remove written work to make room. Ask whether the additional evidence could change the judgement enough to justify the workload.

Start with their work. Curtin pairs a portfolio with a recorded job-interview viva: students must use their own portfolio evidence in an answer.

[See Curtin's portfolio and viva pairing](#)

02 / PREPARE

Let students practise

Where will students rehearse and receive feedback? Clarify criteria, permitted materials and accessible participation, and explain how a discussion differs from a presentation. Sydney and UniSA report students with English as an additional language valuing the chance to clarify questions in the moment. These are reported experiences, not measured outcomes.

Rehearse before it counts. UniSA reports student anxiety and responded with a low-stakes practice oral in the first lab session.

[Read UniSA's account of practice orals](#)

03 / JUDGE

Agree how to judge

Agree how to apply criteria and handle conflicting evidence. Fluency is not proof of broad capability, and hesitation is not proof of its absence. A mismatch with written work does not, by itself, establish misconduct. Recording supports review and appeal; it does not establish consistency. Independently mark a practice response, then compare interpretations to clarify criteria. Agreement on one response is only a starting point.

Keep the question bounded. Sussex draws four questions at random from a bank, with two markers and documented adjustments including extra time and alternative response arrangements.

[See Sussex's question-bank approach and adjustments](#)

04 / RESOURCE

Plan the whole arrangement

Budget the whole appointment, every assessor, preparation and coordination. Who owns missed appointments, adjustments, recording storage and feedback? Check that existing processes fit, and identify what work will be reduced. Appointment length is not staff time: two markers in a ten-minute slot is twenty staff-minutes before preparation and administration.

Book the whole encounter. Newcastle puts a six-minute conversation inside a fifteen-minute appointment. The remaining time covers checks, recording permission, marking and wrap-up.

[Review Newcastle's Assessment Framework Toolkit for Large Cohort Interactive Orals](#)

A PLACE TO START

An illustrative example to adapt.

Capability: adapt a lesson plan using educational psychology.

Opening question: "Choose one decision in your lesson plan. Which theory informed it, and how?"

Follow-up: "Suppose students have less prior knowledge than you expected. What would you change, and why?"

Evidence to listen for: an accurate connection between theory and the decision, a justified adaptation, and recognition of a limitation.

Apply it to your assessment

We could change _____ to gather evidence of _____. Before trying it, we need to resolve _____.

Before the first run, decide: what evidence would help us keep, adapt or stop this approach?

READING THE EVIDENCE

Three Australian practice accounts and four design moves drawn from the wider registry, not a comparative evaluation; contexts and time allocations differ. The scan findings draw on 44 registry instances. Examiner effects are reported in one abstract; no instance publishes a full analysis of inter-rater reliability, examiner effects or appeal outcomes. The prompts and the illustrative example on this page are editorial synthesis; local policy requirements still need checking.

Sources: Newcastle and Curtin pages and Newcastle PDFs checked 8 Sep 2026; implementation dates not stated. UQ account (HERDSA Connect, 30 July 2025) reviewed from supplied full text on 9 Sep 2026; reader comments are separate from the account. Curtin portfolio viva, Sussex and Sydney x2 from institutional pages; UniSA from a HERDSA Connect account; Melbourne from CSHE symposium abstracts.