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Interdisciplinary Hackathons: Experiential Learning Assessment Design to Foster Innovation Competencies and Sustainability Mindset

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Abstract

In a fast-changing modern world with many significant social/environmental challenges, there is a growing imperative for higher education institutions to equip their future graduates with innovation competencies and a sustainability mindset. This paper explores how experiential learning assessment design via a 33-hour non-stop interdisciplinary hackathon could contribute to fostering these graduate attributes. Utilising a qualitative case study involving 230 first-year students of the Agile Innovation course from three different colleges (Health, Business, Engineering), participant obsevation and analysis of student reflections show that the use of hackathons as final exam helps students effectively apply key concepts of creative problem-solving, goal orientation, teamwork, and networking. In addition, the choice of hackathon topic is important for students to gain a deeper understanding of interdisciplinary sustainable issues such as circular economy for tourism. However, the innovation competencies and sustainability mindset developed via the hackathon exam should be further reinforced by both curriculum and co-curriculum activities post-exam, which allow student teams to continue pursuing opportunities in the broader ecosystem to turn their innovative ideas into reality.

Keywords: innovative exam, graduate attributes, agile innovation, general education, Vietnam