

Poster assignment Tool (PAT)

Introduction

Talented students often show different character traits than non-talented students. This difference allows teachers to spot them in the class. For example, regarding learning strategies, students already enrolled in honors programs more often rewrite papers and apply theories (Buckner et al., 2016; Achterberg, 2015).

It is assumed that talented students not yet enrolled in an honors program show sort-a-like character traits. Some of the traits can hardly be discovered during regular class, especially when taking into account that not every talented student shows these character traits in an obvious way. Additionally, we know from research on learning strategies that a questionnaire about learning strategies used by students does not always reproduce the actual learning strategies used (e.g. Leutner & Leopold, 2002, 2003).

Therefore, spotting talented students cannot be done only by observation or using tools such as questionnaires or checklists. Talented students have the potential to rise to the top, and their way to handle different assignments can give a hint about their talents.

This spotter tool is essentially a poster assignment that allows the talented, as well as the less talented, students to express themselves in a creative format.

The poster assignment allows students with a variety of talents to express themselves in a format that lets them combine content and form, and lets them communicate their personal reflections on seemingly non-academic topics. This can potentially inspire students with talents outside the traditional academic interpretation to come forward and reveal otherwise hidden competencies.

Asking the students to express themselves in a creative way like this is a way to acknowledge traits that the talented students may normally hide. Being talented in a higher education institution can be lonely, especially if you feel different from your peers. Giving students a chance to present parts of their lives that are not naturally exposed in the normal study activities sends a signal of acceptance that the class can adopt as a common mindset.

The students can do the poster assignment outside of class and thus it can be used as part of a presentation program at the very beginning of a class. It will allow the students to get to know each other and let them present parts of their lives that they want to be associated with among their peers.

The central questions should inspire the students to reflect on their past, their passions or their ambitions. They should be given the possibility to reflect on and discuss topics that lie outside the curriculum. It is important that the question distracts the students from the scholastic habitus that may have limited their performance thus far, hiding their talents.

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Teachers guide

This assignment can be given to the students as part of a lecture, particularly when you need to let the students engage with their creativity before introducing a more traditional assignment.

It can also be given to students as a form of presentation in a new class. It should be noted though that it can be a sensitive matter to reveal personal reflections to fellow students that you are not yet close to.

Finally, the poster assignment can be given to selected students that show signs of extraordinary talents. In this case, it is important to be aware of the risk of not targeting all the relevant students in the class.

This assignment can also be given to the student to do voluntarily. The fact that a student chooses to take on the assignment is an additional indication that such a student possesses some of the traits which are characteristic to talented students.

The format

The only limitation of the poster should be that it must be able to hang on a wall. Subjecting the students to an obstacle like this can push their creativity further.

This means that the students can choose to make posters in 2 or 3 dimensions. They are free to select suitable materials or to supplement a traditional poster with artefacts of their own choosing.

When the students prepare their posters, the ambition should be that the *form* of the poster is in close alignment with the *content* of the poster. This means that the form of the poster should enhance the messages of the poster. For example, if a student wants to express structured and effective working habits, his or her poster should be well structured, with a clear and well-argued answer to the question in focus.

The central questions

The purpose of the question is to inspire the students to reflect and express themselves in a creative way. You can make your own custom-made question to supplement your curriculum or

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you can pick one of the following sample questions:

- Using your personal knowledge and competencies, how would you like to change the world and why?
- Using your own experiences, what advice would you give your teenage self and why?
- What is your passion in life?
- Who would you like to be 20 years from now?
- How do you plan to make use of your education?
- What do you consider to be the most urgent problem facing humanity and why?
- What pros and cons do you see on governments funding research?
- How do you propose to guide children to embrace modern technology wisely?
- How do you connect your field of study to the outside world?
- What do you see as an important ethical dilemma in your field of study?

Time limits and materials

In this assignment the students are given one week to complete the assignment, but you can of course define the time limit to fit your own schedule. It is important though that the assignment is not stretched too far, since the student's enthusiasm runs the risk of fading out as he or she is busy with his or her regular studies.

To help the students you can provide a variety of materials for them to use. However, their creativity often tends to be limited by the selection of materials available. If the students have to find the materials on their own, they need to stretch their creativity to the fullest.

Note that arrangements should be made to ensure that the students can transport their posters safely to the venue of the presentations.

Presentations

The posters themselves are not enough to spot students applicable for an honors program. The students should present their poster orally in 5 minute presentations to the class. The final evaluation of each student should be based on a combination of the poster and the oral presentation.

Evaluation

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When the students hand in their posters, a variety of signs of talent should be observed. These signs include the following:

- Ability to engage in a topic.
- Competencies in an extra-curricular subject.
- Metacognitive skills that lets them reflect on their own passions.
- Self confidence that allows them to present personal reflections.
- Awareness of the target audience.
- Extensive communicative skills.
- Imagination and creativity.

Do not use peer feedback to evaluate the posters and the presentations. For the poster assignment to be effective and valid as a talent spotting tool, it is important that all participating students are treated with the utmost respect. This is a lot easier for a teacher to exercise fully, than for a group of students.

When evaluating the posters keep in mind that this tool can be used to spot students that might benefit from participating in an honors program at your institution. If you see convincing signs of talents as the above mentioned, continue by referring the relevant student to the right coordinators.

You may use the form at the end of this document to collect your impressions of the posters and presentations in your class in a systematic way.

Example posters

Below you will find three example posters created by students at Copenhagen Honours College in Denmark. Creating the posters was part of the activities during the mandatory introduction seminar. All students are studying to become teachers in grade school.

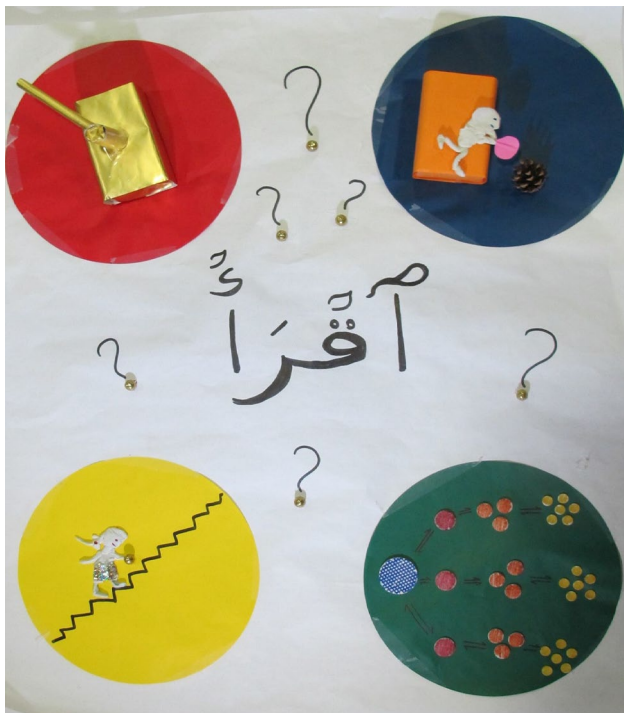
All posters are answers to the following question:

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Using your personal competencies, how would you like to change the world and why?

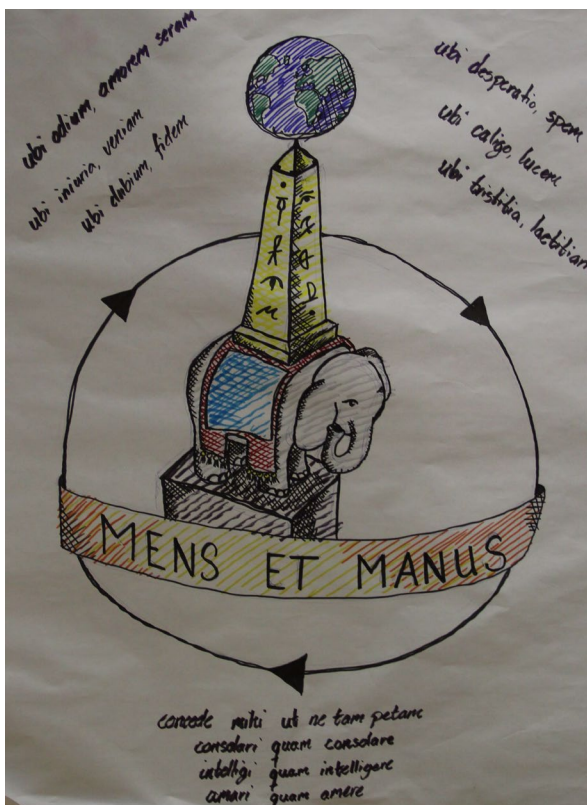
Poster A Made by a student with Syrian background. The Arabic in the middle of the poster translates as “Read to learn”. This student is driven by curiosity towards the world at large and is inspired by the questions of three young children. The poster reflects on the fact that the curiosity of children and a natural thirst for knowledge is a way to change the world.



Poster B Made by a student with an artistic background. This student is driven by very clear and articulated purpose when taking on an assignment. The poster reflects the fact that we are all part of the circles of life, circles that are all interconnected, leaving no one by themselves. This is an interconnection that is necessary to change the world.



Poster C Made by a student with a great love for the classical virtues of education. The poster reflects what the student perceives as universal truths and values that can be used to change the world today, just as they have in the past.



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Evaluation of posters

Mark a score on the scale from 1 to 5 for each of the 7 signs of talent. You may include additional signs of talents of your own choosing in the table below.

- **1** is the lowest score indicating that the student performs below what could be expected.
- **3** is the middle score indicating that the student performs at an expected level.
- **5** the highest score indicating that the student's performance is well above what could be expected.

Student name _____ Date _____

Signs of talent	Mark 1	Mark 2	Mark 3	Mark 4	Mark 5	Comment
Ability to engage in a topic						
Extra-curricular competencies and interests						
Metacognitive skills that lets them reflect on their own passions						
Self-confidence that allows them to present something personal						
Awareness of the target audience						
Extensive communicative skills						
Imagination and creativity						

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Dear student,

It is important to have a variety of interests in order to live a fulfilling life. It is equally important to be true to your passions.

It is easy to see a student only as an academic achiever. However, a lot of the accomplishments in your studies also has to do with parts of your life that lies before and outside of your studies. These merits often show talents that are important to the development of academic competencies, but they are rarely a part of the curriculum.

In this assignment I would like to present to you a rather unusual question. You must answer the question in the form of a poster that can be presented on a wall. When you answer the question and prepare your poster, you should consider how the content of your answer can be expressed by the format of your poster e.g. if your answer has to do with you being very interested in painting, your poster should reflect this creatively instead of being a traditional linear poster setup.

You must create a poster in which you present your personal view on the following question:

Using your personal competencies, how would you like to change the world and why?

Your poster must be created so that it can be hung on a wall, but you are free to choose your materials, whether it should be in two or three dimensions, and to supplement your poster with necessary artefacts. It is important that the form of your poster reflects the content of your answer to the central question.

When your poster is finished, you will be asked to present it to your class. Your presentation should be of appr. 5 minutes and you can express yourself using only your poster and your voice.

Your poster must be ready for presentation one week from now.

Enjoy!