



Alternative Assessment in Group Assignment for Macroeconomics Course Among Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia Students

Mohd Kamal, M. ¹ * Wok, R. ¹ Abdul Kadir, M. ¹ Ahmad Giran, A. H. ¹ Abu Bakar, A. ²

¹ Department of Business Management and Accounting, Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Kuantan, Jalan Gambang, 25150 Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia

² Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), University of Nizwa, P.O. Box 33, Postal Code 616 Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman
muinnudin@kptm.edu.my

Abstract. This paper was conducted to examine the impact of alternative assessment methods on group assignment for Macroeconomics. Around 70 students take Diploma in Business Management from Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia were involved in this study. The main issues identified were students' lack of understanding of assignment instructions and also the theories from chapter-related theories. This issue brings us to the struggle of preparing group assignment reports. The study employed quantitative data collection methods through questionnaires and marks distribution analysis. The findings showed an increase in students' understanding of the assignment question based on group report. This outcome could help some parties to form some appropriate strategy to improve learning modules and teaching delivery that is more focused on student-centered learning. This study recommends expanding the use of alternative assessment in other courses and also in other branches of KPTM Malaysia to gain more impactful findings.

Keywords: Alternative assessment, Group assignment, Macroeconomics, Tertiary, Malaysian students.

1 Introduction

Quality education plays an important role in improving students' understanding of economics-related courses that emphasizes the delivery of knowledge that is structured, relevant and based on critical thinking (Becker and Watts, 2001). Empirical studies highlighted bold key strategies on the effective teaching and the role quality of the educator. Effective teaching approaches, such as the use of student-centered learning, real-world case discussions, analysis of current economic data, and integration of digital technology, can help students connect economic theory with real-world realities (Goffe and Kauper, 2014). The quality of lecturers, curriculum design that is aligned

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with industry needs, as well as assessment methods that evaluate conceptual understanding and practical application also contribute to a deeper mastery of economics courses among students. Quality education not only improves academic achievement, but also shapes students' ability to make rational and informed economic decisions in personal, organizational and societal contexts (Becker, 1975, Hanushek and Woessmann, 2023).

Specifically, study Macroeconomics courses among tertiary students plays a crucial role in developing an understanding of economic issues happened at the bigger scale. Macroeconomics is a field of study that focuses on the analysis of overall economic performance, including issues of economic growth, inflation, unemployment, price stability and the country's balance of payments (Blanchard, 2018). This course covers the role of the government and financial institutions in formulating fiscal and monetary policies to control the economic cycle (Taylor, 2000) and future economic challenges (Gali, 2020). Understanding the concepts and analysis of macroeconomics, students digest about the economic policies and how it delivers the impact on the well-being of society, the stability of the labor market and the performance of the business sector.

This action research study was intended to focus Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia as case and students took the Macroeconomics course based on the Diploma in Business Management. This course is usually offered during Year 2, specifically in either Session July or Session November every year. Refers to the programme learning outcome (PLO), this course playing a role to demonstrate competent knowledge and skills in a business environment (Kolej Poly-Tech MARA, 2020). Other than that, the Macroeconomics course is trying to employing skills, techniques and relevant tools in managing business among students. To achieve these PLOs, there is a course learning outcome (CLO) that still not achieve, which is to apply the macroeconomic policies to the current economic environment. The assessment of group assignment is used to achieve this CLO to improve the student's skills, such as understanding and problem-solving in areas of knowledge, skills, and certain content areas (Shute, 2007). Subsequently, this assessment will be a form of alternative assessment, which is a method of evaluating student learning processes through methods other than written tests. This assessment enables learners to reflect on performance objectively compared to traditional assessments. Unlike the traditional evaluation approaches, alternative assessment tools are composed of process-oriented methods, making evaluation part of learning, and tracking student development (Acar and Anil, 2009; Watt, 2005). Similarly, implementing alternative assessments can help lecturers to observe students in the aspect of cognitive, psychomotor, problem-solving skills, planning strategies and communication skills (Sharifi and Javadi, 2011).

The scenario that normally happens among the lecturers during conducting group assignment is that students become struggle to prepare a group assignment report. This can happen when students need to plan and complete the report very well within a short period of time before the semester ends. Some studies indicate that the technical aspects such as time constraints, coordination difficulties, and deadline pressures are commonly reported challenges in group assignment, which can negatively affect participation, collaboration, and the quality of the report as students attempt to manage limited time and

competing responsibilities (see Alrefaie et al., 2020; Salim et al., 2024). Likewise, difficulty in understanding the chapters related with the assignment question will might students become complicated to merge with the requirement, taking into consideration that students do not have a basic knowledge of economics before this. Other than that, the ability to capture the technical terms and abstract concepts used in both an assignment questions and chapter related. For instance, the relationship between economic issues in a selected country and providing the solutions using monetary policy (Ahmad et al., 2022). Hence, the connection between theory and real-world situations might become complicated for them to decide the right approach to bring their facts and arguments.

In addition, the content of the assignment report also often does not show the mastery of the current situation, with some weak arguments or insufficient evidence support among some students (see Wingate, 2018). Meanwhile, there are also some situations where students give too general explanations that are not directed to the criteria, causing the failure to meet the requirements (see Broadbent and Poon, 2015). This situation can also be reflected through the imbalance in the distribution of content and inconsistent writing style. From a technical aspect, students were reluctant to write when asked to do so and also how to produce a better-quality assignment report. They also feel that the writing process is quite a challenge when they are formed into a group. At the same time, they had to plan and organize how to write properly and often asked the lecturer about their writing performance. These include the inability to analyse and organize ideas in an orderly manner, as well as the lack of knowledge about standard writing formats. In addition, a careless attitude towards the importance of finding relevant sources cause the information presented to be insufficient or inaccurate. Meanwhile, they also need to follow carefully the format and template given based on writing academic ethics.

To overcome these scenarios, this study will be focused on making some continuous quality improvement for group assignment reports. This is aim to enable students to show their better performance according to standard and expectations given. The focus of this study can also bring to improve students' ability to produce quality cohesive written reports very well. Therefore, the objective of the study is to observe the performance level of the group assignment reports produced according to the requirements of the questions and rubric given in the Macroeconomics course. This study can help to identify some systematic strategies to improve the learning mod-ules and teaching delivery that are more focused on student-centered learning. Other than that, there is necessary for developing effective intervention sessions, such as providing academic writing workshops properly to enhance the quality of assignment reports among students. Therefore, this study is not only contributing to the development of individual skills but also improves the academic standards of the institution as a whole.

The collaboration of action research brings together the team from same disciplines across KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia to help shape a community of practice on action research. This is an initiative, started in 2024, and facilitated by the authors of this article (academics in same parts of KPTM), in collaboration with Universiti Malaysia Pahang al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA), who are involved in the Action Research

Network. During the year-long pilot, we've been prototyping ways of learning and doing participatory research to strengthen performance education at KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. The focus has been peer-to-peer mentoring and learning, informed by structured sessions on different aspects of action research. This idea emerged from requests from diploma students engaged in action research to share experiences, learn, and reflect on doing group assignment outside supervisory teams. The collaborative has been run in collaboration with one leading scholars in action research, Dr Aishah binti Abu Bakar from UMPSA.

A range of phases is covered where the action research follows a set rhythm (see Fig. 1.). For each phase, a 2-hour time commitment from participants was proposed to make sure that the process is become smooth.

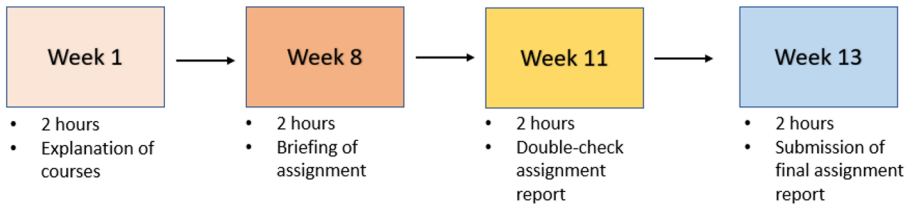


Fig. 1. Typical week by week structure for the action research collaborative session during the semester.

In Week 1, students will be given some explanation about the Macroeconomics courses by describing the CLO and its assessment. In Week 8, students will be briefed about group assignment with providing assignment question and its rubrics. During that week, students need to form about 3-4 students per group to participate in peer group activities and meetings where they critically engage with and discuss the provided resources. In Week 11, they need to submit the first draft of group assignment report to give some improvements based on the concept of alternative assessment. Finally, in Week 13, they need to submit the final group assignment report via Google Classroom.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Alternative Assessment

Assessment plays an important role as both it serves as a tool for measuring learning outcomes and for guiding and enhancing the learning process in influencing students' academic performance. To provide meaningful feedback that helps students identify their advantages and disadvantages, the effective assessment practice can support self-regulated learning and continuous improvement (see Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Broadbent and Poon, 2015). The alignment between assessment with learning objectives and clearly communicated criteria can lead to better understanding among students to focus their efforts, improve critical thinking skills, and demonstrate deeper understanding of course content (Biggs et al., 2022). Other than that, some past studies reveal that formative assessment can bring positive impact for students' motivation and engagement since it encourages active participation and reflection rather than passive

memorization (Black and Wiliam, 2009). Moreover, in higher education contexts, well-designed assessment tasks also reflect the development of transferable skills such as problem-solving, academic writing, and collaboration, that lead to strengthen academic performance and overall learning quality (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004).

The assessment of student performance, specifically in higher education, has evolved beyond traditional examinations which can gained prominence in evaluating students' learning and collaboration skills. Some alternative assessment methods, such as e-portfolios and project-based assessments, have been recognized for their role in enhancing student engagement and collaborative skills (Ganasan et al., 2022). These methods provide students with a platform to work collectively, reflect on their learning, and develop critical thinking abilities. Other than that, Singh et al. (2022) highlight the challenges faced by educators in providing portfolio assessments, demonstrating the need for structured support and training to maximize effectiveness. Likewise, alternative assessment is quite important to give an overall evaluation of students' learning experiences and competencies.

Meanwhile, Nasab (2015) makes some comparisons between traditional and alternative assessments, emphasizing the latter's ability to gauge higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, Ashford-Rowe et al. (2014) establish key elements of authentic assessment, highlighting its role in promoting real-world applications of knowledge. Some of the past literature is also related to alternative evaluation tools, which revealed that educators experience many problems regarding the use of alternative assessment, as mentioned by Benzer and Eldem (2013), Metin and Özmen (2010), and Sağlam-Arslan et al. (2009). They face some problems with adapting the evaluation tools to learners' levels, the time-consuming nature of the process, the delays in assignment submission, and teachers' subjective evaluation (see Özenç et al., 2017).

2.2 Effectiveness of Alternative Assessments in Student's Performance

The integration of alternative assessments at the higher education level has shown promising results in enhancing student performance. For instance, Sulaiman et al. (2021) explored the use of interactive tools such as the scratch and challenge board. These tools can provide a more engaging way for students to demonstrate their understanding of course material. Additionally, Kalra et al. (2017) examined how portfolio assessments can improve the writing skills among students, indicating their applicability across different disciplines. Meanwhile, self-assessment practices, as explored by Uri and Abd Aziz (2017), encourage students to critically evaluate their contributions to group projects. Other past literature, such as Sulaiman et al. (2019), highlights challenges associated with alternative assessments, such as the need for structured implementation and faculty training.

The element of alternative assessment, as mentioned by Blumenstein et al. (2023), show the benefit of using digital peer-feedback platforms within capstone group projects. Based on rubrics provided by them, they found that structured self- and peer-evaluation can enhance feedback literacy and support self-regulation. Another study by Gunning et al. (2022) demonstrated a self-and intra-team peer-assessment strategy across science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teams. The analysis

depicts that some students were flagged for low engagement, reflecting that the assessment method enabled accountability and transparency in team contributions. The tools like problem-based learning (PBL) were implemented by Zhang and Hwang (2023) to assess peer-assessment within a mobile-supported PBL for secondary students. Their peer-assessment-based PBL significantly improved learning outcomes, especially for high-problem-solving students compared with conventional PBL. Meanwhile, Liyanage et al. (2024) found that the satisfaction level among students with peer-assessed contributions increased over time and that smaller groups reported higher satisfaction.

2.3 Implementation of Alternative Assessments in Economics and Business Studies

The integration of alternative assessments in economics and business studies has been explored by some researchers through past literature. For example, Jopp (2020) presents a case study on technology-enhanced learning initiatives that support authentic assessments in business education. Meanwhile, Wiewiora and Kowalkiewicz (2019) also highlight the role of authentic assessments in developing leadership competencies, which are quite important for students pursuing careers in economics and business. Additionally, Ahmad et al. (2014) emphasizes the crucial of faculty competency in implementing alternative assessments effectively. Another past study, such as Shishavan and Jalili (2020), introduced peer assessment to individualize teamwork scores in engineering contexts using the same principles in business studies. Furthermore, Adesina et al. (2023) explored peer assessment within finance modules where students rated peers on certain criteria that contribute some percentages to their grade that emphasizing training and transparency. Their findings were highlighted an enhanced collaborative learning with peer and tutor guidance reinforcing teamwork skills.

2.4 Emerging Trends in Alternative Assessment

Recent studies have further explored the evolution of alternative assessment techniques. For instance, Bechu et al. (2024) analyzed the alternative assessment progress and identified future research needs, advocating for a more integrated approach in educational institutions. Additionally, Muştu (2024) examined the use of both concept maps and mind maps as evaluation tools in science education that emphasizing their effectiveness in promoting conceptual understanding. Meanwhile, Caspari-Sadeghi (2023) reviews machine-learning in educational assessment systems by considering how intelligent tutoring systems adapt learning paths based on an individual learner's progress.

Other past literature such as Agostini et al. (2024) discusses digital tools such as gamification, immersive simulations, and artificial intelligence (AI) based assessments in tertiary education. These methods offer personalized learning, formative scaffolding, and interactive feedback while raising issues around ethics and methodological robustness. Meanwhile, Gómez et al. (2022) also provide a systematic review of game-based assessment. The key trends involved include the use of cognitive and soft-skill evaluation, simulation-based tools, and algorithmic data analysis. Subsequently, O'Rourke

and Doyon (2024) review the use of e-portfolios and blogs as assessment tools by reporting boosts in learner agency, reflective practice, communication, and disciplinary authenticity. Such tasks can imitate real-world professional evidence creation and promote employability skills.

While many studies have been conducted on alternative assessments in some fields, its application in the field of economics requires further exploration. Therefore, group assignments in Macroeconomics courses can potentially benefit from these alternative assessment strategies, fostering analytical skills and teamwork among students. Implementing structured self-assessment methods may enhance students' understanding towards complex economic concepts and encourage active participation. Thus, further study is needed to expose the performance level of these assessment among KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia students. Even though the alternative assessments can significantly enhance student's engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking in group assignments, there remains a gap in study regarding their specific impact on economics field. Additionally, the study might should focus on the challenges associated when implementing these assessments.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative method that function as the primary method to answer the research question. The approach was suitable as the researcher can obtain relevant information from sample of the study. Hence, to minimize bias and raise the survey validity, respondents were required to complete the online survey provided from Google Form. The feedback from the questionnaire, which comprises 20 questions and divided into four sections, as mentioned earlier, was collected and analyzed manually. Then, the results were then transferred to tables for data presentation purposes.

Meanwhile, the researchers observe the assignment marks given for each group. Earlier, the mark distribution for every group assignment was collected and compared to address the extent of the impact of improvement on students' academic writing ability. This method was adopted as it can provided a complete understanding to answer the research problems. The data gained from different instruments could provide conclusive and valid information that could surpass the issue of generalization.

3.2 Research Participants

This study involves around 70 students taking the Diploma of Business Management from KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. Before they can take Macroeconomics course, they must pass the Microeconomics course as their prerequisite. These students were divided into two sections with 35 students per section, where 35 were male students while the rest were female students. Apart from the students, two lecturers where one of them is a male lecturer and the other one is a female lecturer, are assigned to teach Macroeconomics course during that session. For the class, students will meet the lecturers twice a week for about four hours within 14 weeks.

3.3 Instrumentation

Students are required to select a country and do some analysis based on the financial systems and economic policy. They are allocated about one hour for assignment consultation and required to submit the assignment report within Week 13. For the study, these students will become the participants in accomplishing the objectives decided. They were well-informed about participating as a part of the study and were willing to cooperate in any way possible. They also totally understood about their contribution in this study as their group assignment reports were the primary data source and the responses from surveys passed to them were the secondary data needed for data collection. Following research ethics, the identities of the students and lecturers involved were kept confidential and should remain anonymous. This study was using questionnaire in the process of data collection for the purpose of answering the research question. The questionnaire is used as this method is suitable to collect data which involving a number of respondents among KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia, in addition to seeking feedback from those who took the course.

3.4 Research Procedure

This study covers the duration of Week 8 until Week 13 for Session November 2024. The process began with assignment questions during Week 8 to the students during class. Initially, the assignment briefing was conducted for all classes during that week. At the same time, they need to form a group of around a maximum of five members per group. Overall, there are around 17 groups that will prepare an assignment report. Each group are required to select one country except Malaysia, and hence, discuss each other to planning and organizing the draft based on the assignment question. During the preparation period, each group needs to show their progress to the lecturers. Throughout the process, the lecturers will be served more as a facilitator in guiding and assisting the students. Finally, students need to submit their assignment report within Week 13 via Google Classroom in the PDF format.

A set of questionnaires were distributed to the students as their respondents. The aim of the questionnaire is to obtain their personal feedbacks and views about the performance level of preparing a group assignment report for this course. The students were asked to choose their responses based on a Likert scale, ranging from Scale 1 denoted as "Strongly Disagree", to Scale 4 indicating "Strongly Agree". Students need to answer that questionnaire via online using Google Form provided.

Meanwhile, the assignment report will be assessed and graded by using a rubric provided from the faculty. The criteria to assess the assignment report is such as problem identification, analysis of the problem, strategy used to solve the problem using monetary policy, ability to apply the concepts of monetary system used by the country, as well as formatting and references. The marks will be calculated based on the rubric where this assessment will contribute about 20% of their continuous assessment.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis approach used in this study is to use a quantitative data analysis approach. For the survey, Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the responses and to calculate percentages. The researchers categorised the students' responses into four themes which cover the aspect of authenticity, collaboration and teamwork aspect, clarity and effectiveness of assignment instruction aspect, and quality of report produced aspect. The data collected from students were transformed into tables and were descriptively narrated.

Meanwhile, the researchers observe the assignment marks given for each group. Earlier, the mark distribution for every group assignment was collected and compared to address the extent of the impact of improvement on students' academic writing ability. This method was adopted as it can provide a complete understanding to answer the research problems. The data gained from different instruments could provide conclusive and valid information that could surpass the issue of generalization.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Before the questionnaire was sent to the organizations, a face and content validation process was conducted by subject matter experts from UMPISA. A total of three discussions were held for this purpose and the results were used to improve the questionnaire. For alternative assessments such as the assessment of group assignments, establishing reliability through consistent rubric application ensures that observed differences in student outcomes are attributable to actual performance differences rather than measurement error or subjective judgment.

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Students' Response About Writing Assignment Report

The findings from respondents based on the questionnaire shows that the majority of them express their agreement with the authenticity element of the assignment question. For instance, Table 1 indicates the percentage of respondents who performed in a group assignment in the context of authenticity. These findings indicate that there is a strong agreement within the respondents about the authenticity of the group assignment question.

Table 1. Response in the Aspect of Authenticity.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The assignment can show an application of macroeconomics to real life scenario.	0%	2.9%	55.7%	41.4%
The assignment can be done in groups to enhance our understanding on macroeconomics.	0%	2.9%	38.6%	58.6%

The time given for the assignment is sufficient to complete it effectively.	0%	4.3%	37.1%	58.6%
The process of preparing the group assignment report was well-organized and clearly defined.	0%	2.9%	34.3%	62.9%
Every group member contributed original ideas related to topic given without copying from others.	1.4%	1.4%	32.9%	64.3%

Notably, about 97.1% of respondents both agreed and strongly agreed that the assignment question allowed them to apply the macroeconomics theory to real-life scenarios. Furthermore, around 97.2% appreciated the group work can help to emphasize their macroeconomics understanding, while 95.7% felt that the time allocated to complete the group assignment was sufficient. Likewise, a significant proportion (97.2%) also presumed that the assignment process was well-organized and clearly defined, and around 97.2% affirmed that each group member can contribute original ideas without plagiarism. These findings reflect a high level of engagement and perceived relevance, validating the authenticity of the assignment and its role in contextual learning.

The next part is about the element of collaboration and teamwork, where the results show that students are aware of the importance of active participation of group members. This feedback can be seen in Table 2, where the findings depict that although the spirit of cooperation exists, the level of competence in processing the content can be improved. In addition, students can demonstrate a strong collaborative atmosphere during the assignment process.

Table 2. Response in Collaboration and Teamwork Aspect.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
All group members actively participated during the preparation of the macroeconomics assignment.	0%	2.9%	37.1%	60.0%
Our group felt comfortable expressing our ideas and opinions.	0%	5.7%	31.4%	62.9%
Every member respected and listened to each other’s opinions during discussion.	0%	8.6%	32.9%	58.6%
Support each other to complete individual tasks based on assignment for the benefit of whole group.	0%	2.9%	24.3%	72.9%
Good collaboration among group members contributed to high performance of our assignment.	0%	4.3%	28.6%	67.1%

For example, around 97.1% believed that all members can actively participate in preparation of an assignment. Meanwhile, about 94.3% felt comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions within their group. Furthermore, 91.5% mentioned that group members respected and listened to each other’s opinions. Similarly, a high percentage

(97.2%) confirmed that their group can support each other in completing individual parts to be compiled in one report. Next, around 95.7% can attribute the group's performance to effective collaboration. These responses propose that the group assignment fostered a cooperative and positive learning environment that involves mutual respect and shared responsibility.

In the aspect of clarity and effectiveness of assignment instruction, the majority of respondents agreed that the assignment instructions were clear and helpful in planning and organizing assignments. The findings in Table 3 reveal that the clarity of the assignment instructions received highly favorable responses.

Table 3. Response in Clarity and Effectiveness of Assignment Instruction Aspect.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The instructions for the macroeconomics group assignment were clear and easy to understand.	0%	2.9%	35.7%	61.4%
The assignment guidelines provided enough detail for us to know what was expected.	0%	1.4%	40%	58.6%
The assignment instructions helped our group organize and plan the work effectively.	0%	2.9%	40%	57.1%
Clear assignment instructions helped improve the quality of our group's performance.	0%	0%	34.3%	65.7%
Our group fully understood the rubric criteria based on the instructions given.	0%	4.3%	35.7%	60%

About 97.1% of students found that the assignment instructions given became clear and understandable, while around 98.6% believed the assignment guidelines provided is much sufficient detail. Likewise, about 97.1% acknowledged the usefulness of instructions in planning and organizing the report. Similarly, 100% agreed that clarity in instruction improved the group's performance. Furthermore, 95.7% of students reported fully understanding the rubric criteria given. These results show the effectiveness of clear instructional design in guiding student performance and enhancing outcomes.

Table 4 shows the results in response to the quality of report produced. The respondents revealed a strong confidence in the quality of the assignment report.

Table 4. Response in Quality of Report Produced Aspect.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The final report should follow the assignment rubric and guidelines.	0%	1.4%	30%	68.6%
The content of our report is relevant and directly answers the assignment questions.	0%	1.4%	30%	68.6%

The report demonstrated a strong understanding of macroeconomics concepts.	0%	0%	41.4%	58.6%
The group ensures that all references and citations are correctly included in the report.	0%	2.9%	38.6%	58.6%
The overall quality of report meets the expectations of the course requirements.	0%	4.3%	34.3%	61.4%

Around 98.6% of respondents affirmed adherence to assignment rubrics and guidelines to make sure that the content of our assignment report is relevant following the question and criteria. Meanwhile, 100% of respondents believed their reports demonstrated a strong understanding of macroeconomics concepts. Additionally, 97.2% of respondents indicated that proper referencing and citation was maintained, while 95.7% of respondents felt confident that their report met course expectations. These findings demonstrate a high standard of academic output and suggest that the alternative assessment effectively nurtured key academic competencies.

4.2 Students’ Performance Based on Mark Assignment Report

The group assignment for Macroeconomics course contributes about 20% to their continuous assessment. Therefore, the lecturer graded the group assignment reports based on the rubric given. The findings are based on the compilation of marks gained by students from two different sections: Section 11 and Section 12. Specifically, a total of 17 groups were assessed, which were 10 groups from Section 11 and 7 groups from Section 12. Each group comprises three to five members. For the purpose of grading consistency, the scores were evaluated to a full mark and later transferred into a 20% contribution to their marks. Table 5 shows the results of the students’ assessments of their assignment reports.

Table 5. Student’s Results of Assignment Report.

Section 11		Section 12	
Group 1	16.2%	Group 1	13.9%
Group 2	15.2%	Group 2	15.6%
Group 3	13.5%	Group 3	17.3%
Group 4	13.5%	Group 4	16.8%
Group 5	14.4%	Group 5	16.9%
Group 6	16.2%	Group 6	15.8%
Group 7	16.2%	Group 7	13.4%
Group 8	15.3%		
Group 9	14.4%		
Group 10	12.6%		

Overall, all students get marks from around 12.6% to 17.3%. Specifically, the lowest mark for Section 11 is about 12.6% and the highest mark is 16.2% out of 20%. From this distribution, Group 1, Group 6 and Group 7 from Section 11 achieved the highest marks. Meanwhile, Group 4, with 12.6% out of 20%, had the lowest score. Similarly, for Section 12, the overall findings indicate that the majority of the groups performed within the average to high range, with five groups achieving marks above 14% out of 20%, which is consistent with good mastery of course content and satisfactory group coordination. There are only two groups that fell below this benchmark, which is slightly lower than 14% out of 20%.

The results provided demonstrate that students generally understood the requirements of an assignment and were able to practice the macroeconomics theory effectively in a group setting. High-performing groups demonstrated accurate analysis, clear structure, and strong presentation of macroeconomics analysis. Meanwhile, the few lower-performing groups may need more guidance on research and writing skills. The results also reveal that group-based assessment can play a role as a reliable tool to help students' understanding of macroeconomics concept.

4.3 Discussion

The performance level of KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia students' on preparing the group assignment report is the major findings of this study. Since the content of assignment question contains the element of alternative assessment, the storyline of question can affect the quality of group assignment report. Alternative assessment methods, specifically for group assignments, are widely important to encourage higher-order learning outcomes relevant to macroeconomics theory. The group assignment is believed to develop teamwork, analytical reasoning, communication, and application of macroeconomic indicators to real contexts. The systematic reviews by referring to other sources to gain some ideas is also crucial to arrange the facts and arguments properly. This finding related to this principle is parallel with the study by Gulikers et al. (2004), where they reveal that authentic assessment enhances learning by simulating real-world challenges as well as encouraging deeper cognitive engagement.

Other than that, the aspect of synthesizing findings from credible sources, analyzing their relevance to related context, and also presenting them in a structured academic format can guide the students to produce better assignment report. Through synthesizing, students are able to integrate information from multiple sources rather than summarizing a single source in isolation that can help them to build a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Analyzing the related context can ensure that only evidence directly connected to the specific area or local context is included which making the discussion focused and meaningful. Furthermore, presenting the material in a structured academic format encourages clarity, credibility, and professionalism. These outcomes support the study by Herrington and Herrington (2006) which express that the tasks grounded in real-life application help students to see the relevance of their learning to improved motivation and performance.

In another aspects, collaboration among group members is also another element in group assignments. Collaboration in group assignments is a dynamic process in which group members interact, negotiate, share understanding, coordinate effort, and contribute to collective learning. These outcomes support the study by Johnson and Johnson (2009), which emphasizes that the environment of cooperative learning fosters academic achievement and interpersonal skills. Likewise, the positive perceptions of collaboration in this finding reinforce claims by Gillies (2016), who reveal that structured group work can significantly lead to both social and academic gains in higher education settings. However, there are some possibilities of risk that should overcome such as unequal contribution, free-riding, and increased instructor workload for designing and moderating group processes as mentioned by Tumpa et al. (2022).

The clarity and effectiveness of assignment instructions also play an important role in determining the quality of students' work and their overall learning experience. Clear instructions from the lecturers can provide students with a precise understanding of the task requirements, objectives, evaluation criteria, and deadlines. Additionally, effective instructions also articulate the aim of the task so that students can see its relevance and are motivated to engage more deeply. This thing is potentially can reduces anxiety and confusion while promoting confidence in completing the assignment. The clear instructions also help in coordinating group roles and responsibilities, minimizing conflicts, and ensuring equitable participation. Therefore, investing time in designing and communicating clear, detailed, and purposeful assignment instructions is important for enhancing learning outcomes and assessment fairness. This echoes the outcomes of Panadero et al., (2017) who demonstrated that explicit assessment criteria enhance students' understanding of task requirements and support higher-quality academic work. Similarly, Jonsson and Panadero (2018) found that the use of well-designed rubrics is potentially provides enhances self-regulated learning, effective instructional scaffolding, and contributes to improved student performance by helping learners monitor and evaluate their own work more systematically.

The application of alternative assessment aligns with outcome-based education and 21st-century learning. Specifically, macroeconomics can assess real-world economic thinking, not just formula application. By embedding macroeconomic concepts in collaborative tasks, the study can further assess students' ability to connect policy discussions with Malaysian economic issues. The study also contributes fresh insights into how group-based evaluation can enhance critical thinking, communication, and employability skills while making macroeconomic learning become more relevant to real-world economic issues. Meanwhile, alternative group assessment promotes peer-to-peer knowledge construction, communication, and leadership skills as the employers' value. This pattern is parallel with past findings by Mubuuke et al. (2017), who indicated that while alternative assessments emphasize learning, their success also relies on group dynamics and the facilitation of peer contributions. Indeed, the results confirm that an alternative assessment on a macroeconomics course not only promotes conceptual understanding but also increases soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

5 Conclusion

This study reveals that students can perform in preparing the group assignment report. These outcomes also signify that students' ability towards group assignment reports is closely related to their level of understanding of the question given. This study has provided some proof of the applicability of assignment practice among KPTM Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia students. However, other further research needs to examine other elements that can lead to a student's performance level on the Macroeconomic course. The present study mainly focuses on two groups for one field in one branch of KPTM. Therefore, future study should focus on another field, such as those who take accounting courses, and also widen the branch to look at the impact on a bigger scale. Written assignment reports were the only approaches that applied to assess students' ability to understand the Macroeconomic theories. Thus, there is highly recommended that other fields and also other branches are involved to find out the possible level of understanding the assignment question using alternative assessment. Meanwhile, the number of participants in this study was limited where only 70 students and two lecturers were involved. Since this study was only confined to one branch of KPTM, the results could not be generalized as a response of all students learning Macroeconomics in Malaysia. It is suggested that in the future, similar studies should be observed involving other subjects related to economics. Future implementations should consider another assessment such as quiz, test, and final examination to further strengthen the learning process. Several practical implications can be implemented towards this study such as encouraging to adopt clearly structured assessment rubrics and transparent criteria among lecturers to guide students in understanding expectations. Second, applying formative elements such as staged submissions, peer evaluation, and continuous feedback to support students in planning, organizing, and refining their academic writing throughout the learning process. This recommendation is important to improving the quality, consistency, and fairness of group assignment outcomes.

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