Mathematics exams as a learning process to build skills, knowledge and confidence

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This paper focuses on the challenges of inspiring mathematics learning in pre-service primary teachers and the subsequent modifications made to a pair of mathematics content subjects to address these issues. Many of the student cohort have poor basic mathematical skills, little confidence in their mathematical ability and as a result often exhibit avoidance behaviour, yet need an in-depth understanding of certain mathematical concepts to be successful in their chosen career. To motivate learning, modifications were made to the implementation of the subjects which include the introduction of mastery exams into the assessment and additional face-to-face class time providing support for those students deemed to be at risk. We present our particular context, a review of the literature and details of our mastery exam system. We reflect on the implementation of this system, the outcomes in student performance, and student reaction towards the assessment structure.