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Assessment and Feedback: where are we now and where are we going?



Welcome

LEARNING, TEACHING & ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE



Assessment & Feedback: Where are we now and where are we going?

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UNIVERSITY of
Cumbria

The logo for the University of Cumbria, featuring a stylized green leaf design above the word 'Cumbria'.

Positive developments in assessment

- Shift to diversify assessment;
- Development of innovative assessment:
 - Better focus on assessment for learning;
 - integrated into teaching;
 - using authentic tasks;
 - link to work-based learning.
- Increasing transparency in assessment;
- Group, peer & self assessment
- Subject and national initiatives to improve assessment – e.g. Scottish Enhancement Themes, *A Marked Improvement*, TESTA
- Staff development in assessment (PCAPs, staff confs)

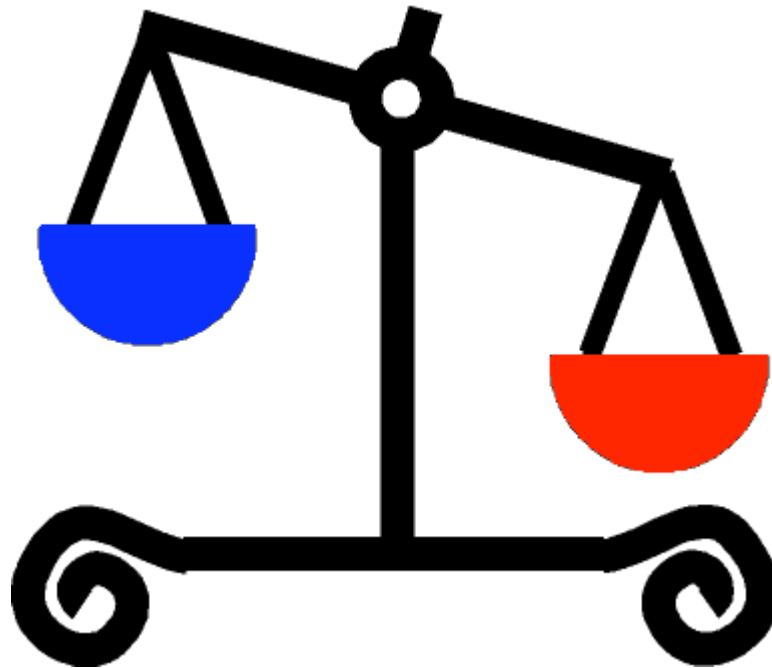


Major problems/issues in valid assessment practice

1. Not assessing programme outcomes.
2. Atomisation of assessment
3. Students and staff failing to see the links/coherence of the programme.
4. Modules too short for complex learning.
5. Surface learning and ‘tick-box mentality.
6. Inappropriate ‘one-size-fits-all’.
7. Over-standardisation in regulations.
8. Too much summative – not enough formative.



The unbalanced purposes of assessment



**Assessment *for*
and *as* learning**

**Assessment of learning:
Certification & QA**

Assessment needs to do 'double duty' to be effective (Boud, 2000)

Feedback and learning

Studies suggest
that useful feedback
to students

- comes at the draft stage;
- Involves active participation of students
- is forward looking;
- Involves dialogue;
- Is rich in information
- focuses on skills
- Is relational

But written feedback
often

- Arrives after the work is finished;
- Students passive recipients
- Focuses on the work completed;
- Doesn't involve any dialogue;
- May be only a few paragraphs and annotations
- Focuses on content
- Is anonymous

What we say and what we do

What our guidance implies

Explicit documentation of standards

Criterion-referenced grading

Analytical judgement

There is a 'right' mark

We struggle to communicate the reality of our professional judgement in a way which is understandable and credible to students?

Bloxham (2012)

Reality of academic judgement

Markers' standards are internalised and tacit (difficult to express)

Norm-referencing of judgement needed/ interpretation of criteria

Holistic professional judgement

Marker variation



Discussion

Talk to your neighbours about whether you recognise my analysis of current assessment practice.



Assessment as teaching in the lecture theatre

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wont2v_LZ1E

The assessment of what students know is seamlessly blended with teaching. The students learn whether they understand, the lecturer knows if more 'teaching' is needed.

Eric Mazur, teaching physics, Harvard



Teacher education: assessment as teaching

- First year students, assessment 4000 word portfolio;
- Professional Development Activity (PDA) after each taught session;
- the PDAs were used in various ways:
 - peer reviewing;
 - collating
 - applying research to a case or problem
 - sharing of work.
- Summative assignment 1500 words
- eight PDAs as appendices referenced in the text.
- Favourable student evaluation
- Higher marks, better engagement

Georgia Prescott, Cumbria



The power of explanation:

Group assessment in computing

- Converging evidence from cognitive science, education, and cognitive development is confirming that explanation plays a significant role in learning*.
- **Spanish example****: student grades were made dependent on the individual grades obtained by all other members in the group. In this way, students are encouraged to help each other, and their level of commitment is increased.
- Students who did this did significantly better – both individually and collectively – than those not offered this opportunity. Explanation was seen as key.

*Williams and Lombrozo, 2010

**Arevalillo-Herráez & Claver, 2014

Benefits of peer assessment

Evidence shows students find their peers a useful and more approachable source of help with assignments but we need to stress the main value in peer assessment is standing in the shoes of the assessor – not being assessed – because:

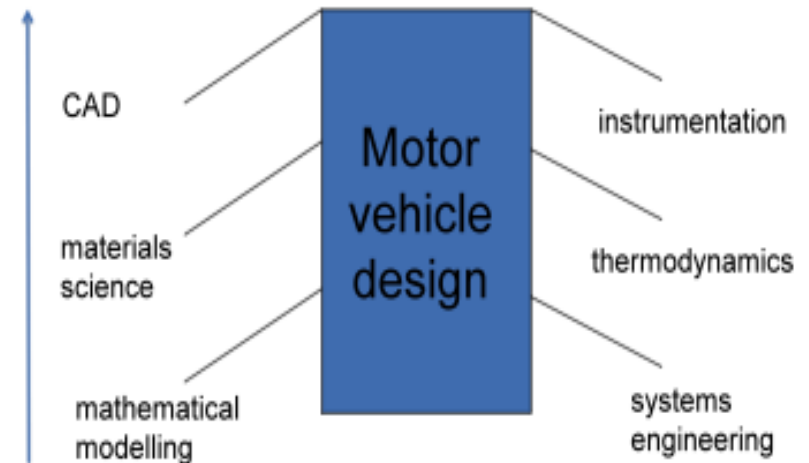
- learning about standards – absolutely crucial to making progress and understanding feedback
- Seeing other ways of going about the task – develops strategies for taking action
- Key employability skill – being able to judge own performance and assessing and giving feedback to others
- More opportunity for dialogue
- Chance for more, rich, formative feedback

Peer assessment needs to become a regular feature of programmes so that it is taken seriously and taken for granted as part of learning at this level.



Programme assessment ideas

- Accumulative projects.
- Capstone module/s, eg fashion show.
- Portfolio/E-portfolio (? Linked with PDP).



PASS project

<http://www.pass.brad.ac.uk/workshop.php>



Programme assessment: Coventry Business Management

- Each year will have a unifying theme, focussing on a different sector exemplified by a local employer with a global reach or brand – 1st Year Cadburys/Kraft, 2nd Year Jaguar, 3rd Year Barclays.
- Second semester of each year, 50% assessment will be through a large integrative task, which will be designed to assess learning from all three modules.
- 50% of each module will be independently assessed, but other 50% will come from the assessment of the integrated task against different criteria appropriate to each module's different learning outcomes.

Really useful knowledge

- Focus on the **whole** task;
- Make standards concrete with **exemplars**;
- Exemplars accompanied by **dialogue** and/or activity (what tutors see in a good/ poor piece - to make standards visible);
- **Peer** assessment vital ('insiders rather than consumers' Sadler 1998);
- Develop '**idea of standards**' not 'precise guidance' conception amongst students (Bell *et al* 2013)



Grade Point Average (May 2015)*



Aim: to increase granularity, international equivalence, student engagement and transparency.

Some recommendations

1. A single GPA scale for UK higher education should be adopted by all UK providers;
2. 'Dual running', during which both GPA and Pass and Honours Degree Classification outcomes will be reported, should be introduced in the first instance. This should be followed by a national review of the adoption of GPA after a period of no more than five years. Institutions may wish to switch to GPA alone when they judge appropriate;

Conclusion

- There have been many positive changes in UK university assessment over the last couple of decades; individuals and programmes have made important strides in making assessment more valid and more effective for learning;
- However, many aspects of assessment remain in need of attention;
- The biggest challenges are to **rebalance** the purposes of assessment, improve the **programme focus** and gain a **better fit** between knowledge of effective assessment and many of current practices.

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