

Welcome!

Transforming Assessment in Higher Education

Vic Stephenson

Day 1 – University of Rome Tor Vergata

February 2024



 **AdvanceHE**

Introductions



Vic Stephenson,
Senior Consultant (Education),
Advance HE

Advance HE – who we are

We **help** higher education organisations be the best they can be, by **unlocking the potential of their people**.

In partnership with members and stakeholders, we work to:

- enhance confidence and trust in higher education
- address systemic inequalities for staff and students
- advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society.



 **AdvanceHE**

Programme Overview and Today's ILOs

- To discuss current trends and findings in assessment and feedback research and consider how learnings may be embedded in assessment practice

- To identify the key principles of effective and inclusive assessment design

- To consider how we can promote assessment *for* and *as* learning into curricula

- To focus on strategies for developing assessment literacy in staff and students

- To identify effective approaches for promoting student engagement with assessment and feedback

- To identify possible developments and the implementation of innovative approaches in assessment and feedback

Plan for the day

Time	Focus
10:00 – 11:15	Where we are: current research into assessment and feedback
11:15 – 11:30	<i>Break</i>
11:30 - 12:45	The how and what of assessment: what does 'good' assessment look like?
12:45 – 1:30	<i>Lunch</i>
1:30 – 2:45	How do we embed authenticity and lifelong learning in assessment?
2:45 – 3:00	<i>Break</i>
3:00 – 3:55	How do we ensure our assessments are inclusive?
3:55 – 4:00	Wrap up and close

Reflect and discuss

15 mins

- Groups of 3 or 4
- Use the 'fortune teller' to prompt discussion on your ideas and experience of assessment and feedback



Feedback

- What does assessment mean to you?
- What does assessment mean to students?
- What challenges have you faced / are you facing in designing or delivering assessments?
- How do you ensure students engage with the feedback you provide?
- How do you ensure staff are all marking to the same standards?

The importance of assessment

‘Assessment is the engine that drives learning’ (Cowan, 1998)

‘The assessment regime sends messages about the standard and amount of work required, and about which aspects of the syllabus are the most important’ (Ramsden, 2003)

‘Assessment frames learning, creates learning activity, and orients all aspects of learning behaviours’ (Gibbs, 2006)

‘Students can escape bad teaching but not bad assessments’ (Boud, 1995)

Assessment methods influence learning

Different methods measure different skills

Different methods require different efforts

Different people are good at assessing different things

Peer assessment is an effective way of providing formative feedback

How do your students feel about A & F?

We spend vast amounts of time and energy on assessment and associated feedback to students, but students continue to rate assessment and feedback relatively poorly in student surveys

The teaching on my course

Source: NSS (National Student Survey) [↗](#)

Data from 30 students
(70% of those who were asked)

All final year students are asked to complete the National Student Survey



Staff are good at explaining things



Staff have made the subject interesting



The course is intellectually stimulating



My course has challenged me to achieve my best work

Learning opportunities

Source: NSS (National Student Survey) [↗](#)

Data from 30 students
(70% of those who were asked)

All final year students are asked to complete the National Student Survey



My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth



My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics



My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt

Assessment and feedback

Source: NSS (National Student Survey) [↗](#)

Data from 30 students
(70% of those who were asked)

All final year students are asked to complete the National Student Survey



The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance



Marking and assessment has been fair



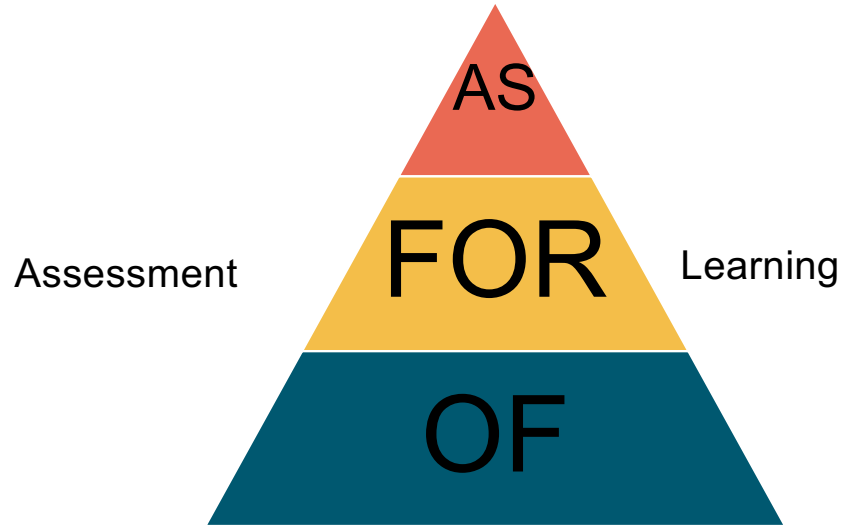
Feedback on my work has been timely



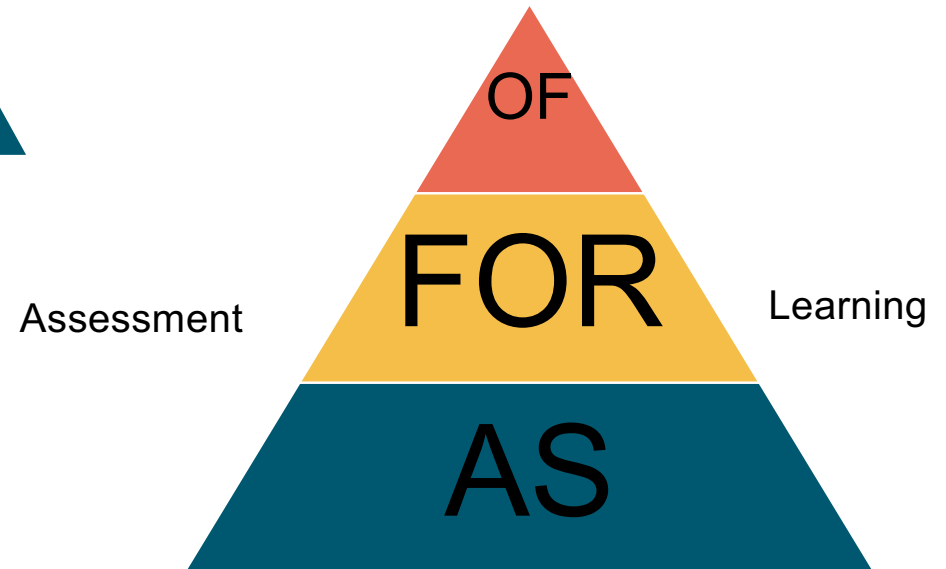
I have received helpful comments on my work

Why do we assess?

Traditional Assessment Pyramid



Reconfigured Assessment Pyramid



Why do we assess?

for learning **To give feedback on learning and teaching**

- Teachers and peers check progress and learning to help learners to determine how to improve, and to inform the planning of future learning.
- Low stakes assessments used primarily for feedback purposes, dialogic feedback / feedforward.

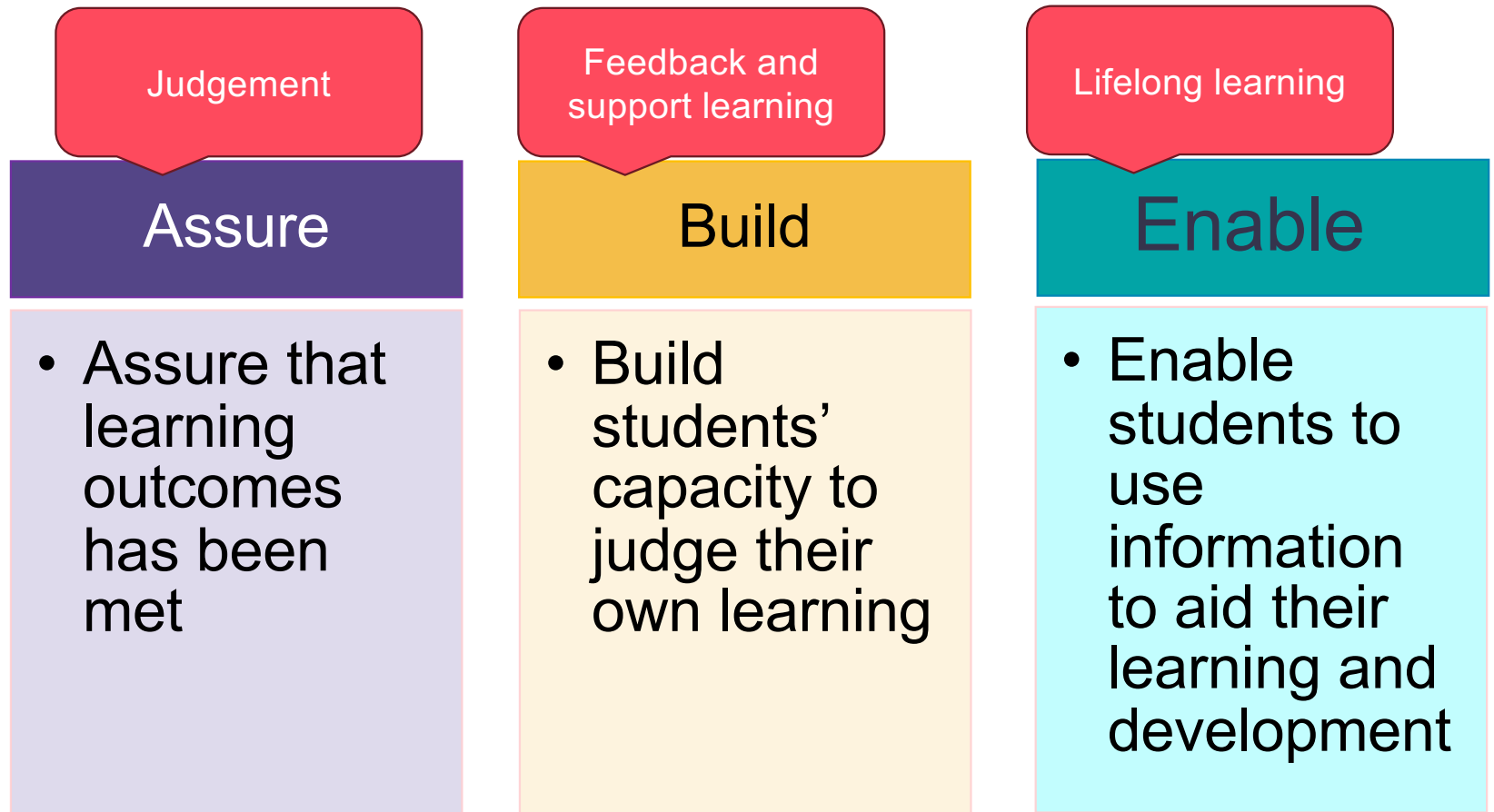
as learning **To self-regulate and critically evaluate**

- Learners use formal and informal feedback and self-assessment to help understand the next steps in learning.
- Learners monitor their own progress, ask questions, use exemplars to develop understanding of marking criteria, self- and peer-assess.

of learning **To demonstrate achievement**

- Measures students' level of performance, and / or whether learning outcomes have been met.
- High stakes, graded assessment, contributing to final degree classification.

Why do we assess?



- Do your assessments fit more into one or two of these categories?

What are the
key themes in
research
around
assessment?
(According to
Chat GPT)

1. Remote and Online Learning:

- Exploration of assessment methods suitable for remote and online learning environments.
- Investigation of the impact of technology on assessment practices in virtual classrooms.

2. Adaptive Learning and AI:

- Research on the integration of adaptive learning technologies and artificial intelligence in assessment to personalize learning experiences.
- Examination of the ethical implications of using AI in assessment.

3. Resilience and Well-being:

- Consideration of the role of assessment in supporting student well-being, especially in times of increased stress and uncertainty.

4. Equity and Inclusivity:

- Continued emphasis on inclusive assessment practices that consider diverse student populations, including those facing socioeconomic challenges.
- Exploration of the digital divide and its impact on equitable access to assessments in remote learning settings.

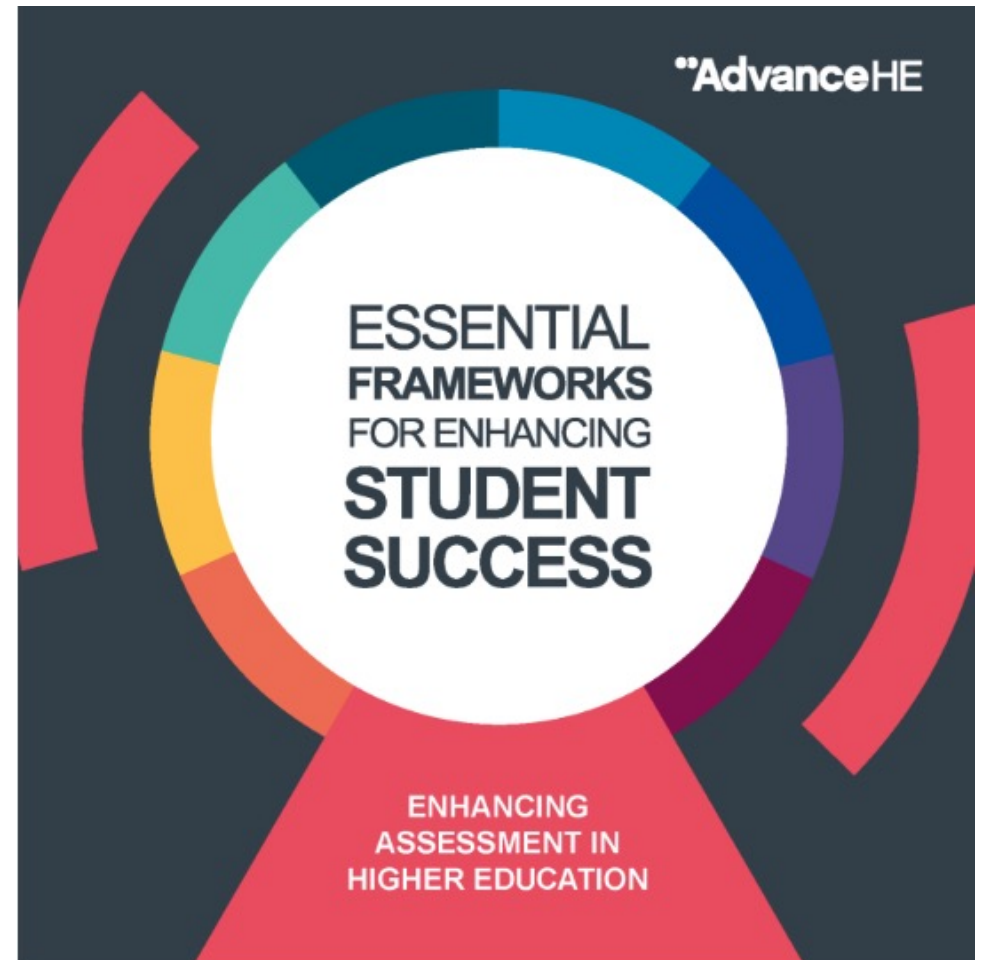


What are the
key themes in
research
around
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(According to
Chat GPT)

5. **Alternative Assessment Formats:**
 - Research on the effectiveness of alternative assessment formats, such as project-based assessments, open-book exams, and authentic assessments.
6. **Assessment in Competency-Based Education:**
 - Exploration of assessment models aligned with competency-based education approaches, focusing on mastery of specific skills and knowledge.
7. **Gamification and Interactive Assessments:**
 - Investigation of the effectiveness of gamified elements and interactive assessments in engaging students and enhancing learning outcomes.
8. **Formative Feedback in Online Environments:**
 - Continued exploration of strategies for providing formative feedback in online and blended learning environments.
9. **Crisis-Responsive Assessment Strategies:**
 - Examination of how assessment practices adapt during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and identification of resilient assessment strategies.
10. **Student Agency and Co-Creation:**
 - Research on involving students in the assessment process, promoting self-regulated learning, and co-creating assessment criteria.

2024 Student Success Frameworks

- Embedding Employability
- Enhancing Assessment
- Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression
- Student Engagement
- Internationalising Higher Education
- Flexible Learning
- Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Inclusive Curriculum
- Enhancing Student Success



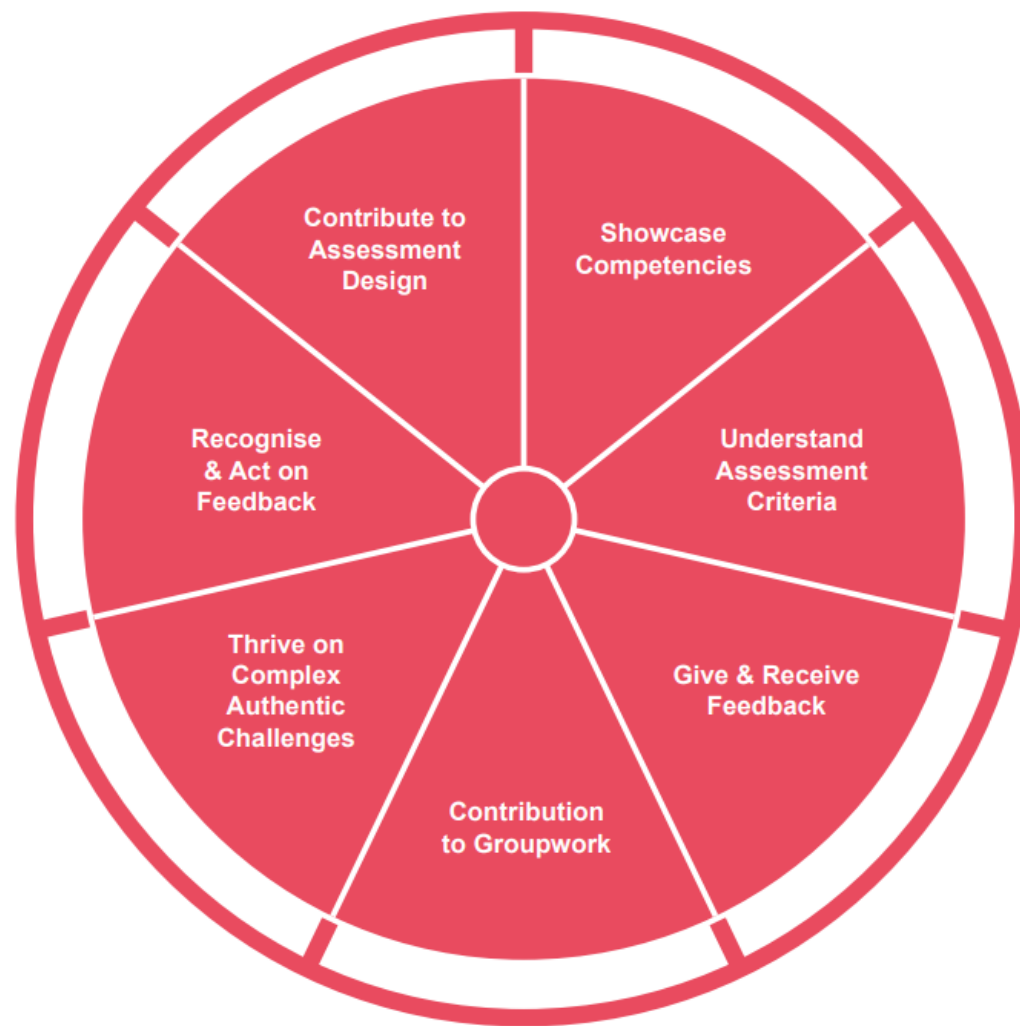
Student Success Framework: Enhancing Assessment in HE (2024)



Student Success Framework: Educators

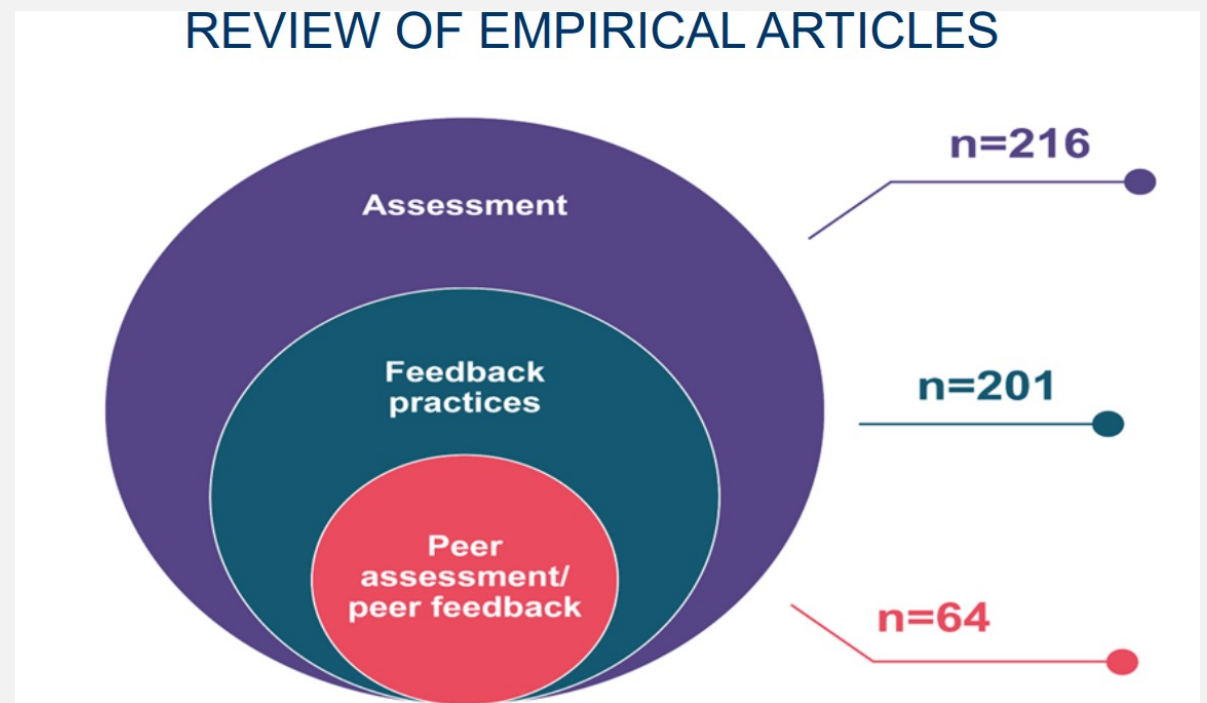


Student Success Framework: Students



AHE
Literature
review
(2016 – 22)

Literature review aimed to summarise evidence-based assessment and feedback policy and approaches in HE which had a demonstrable impact on student **satisfaction, engagement and outcomes**



Discuss
and
categorise:

What you
do, what
you'd *like* to
do, what
you may
not be able
to do?

Key recommendations from the literature review:

- Aim to incorporate at least one **high-impact practice** into each student's experience
- Use, evaluate and refine **authentic** assessments
- Explore social, ethical and behavioural interventions in relation to **academic integrity**, not just technical or legal solutions
- Attend to the specific evidence-based requirements of each type of authentic assessment
- Incorporate carefully designed **groupwork** across each student's programme
- Shift the **culture of feedback** to emphasise and support students' use of it
- Treat feedback as part of an **ongoing, positive relationship**, not a one-off event
- Help students **understand** assessment criteria and standards
- Be aware that students come with **different experiences** of, expectations of, and preparedness to learn from feedback
- Increase opportunities for **peer assessment and peer feedback**
- **Scaffold support** prior to and during episodes of peer feedback and peer assessment
- Evaluate **educational technologies** in relation to the educational goals they support and principles they afford



Comfort break: 15 mins

The how and what of
assessment: What does
effective assessment look like?

Assessment drives learning

Effective assessment design considers the links between three components: the **learning outcomes of the course** (i.e. the intention of the teacher and expectation of what the students will be learning); the **teaching and learning activities** the students are engaged in to facilitate learning; and the **assessment tasks** that test students' abilities linked to the learning outcomes.

A **constructively aligned** programme capitalises on the powerful effect of assessment on students' learning experiences. If assessment drives students' learning, then students are most likely to achieve our intended outcomes if the assessment is aligned with our intentions.

'In an aligned curriculum, learning outcomes and assessment practice are developed iteratively to ensure 'assessment **of, for** and **as** learning' (Biggs, 1999).

Constructive alignment

Biggs (1996)

Intended Learning Outcomes

What should students know or be able to do as a result of the course?

What activities are appropriate for students in order to develop the desired competencies?

How can students demonstrate they have acquired the desired level of competencies?

Learning and teaching activities

Assessment

When
constructive
alignment is
missing

How would you teach and test the target language of telling the time in French?

Why had the students failed?

A video frame showing a woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing a purple top and a dark blazer, speaking. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Kathy Wright SFHEA

Assistant Director, Knowledge, Innovation and Delivery

Reflect and
discuss:
Constructive
alignment

10 mins

■ Do you know what the intended learning outcomes are for your course? Do you have input into their creation?

■ How does the assessment on your module allow students to demonstrate they have met the module learning outcome / outcomes?

■ Do you know what the threshold standard is for the learning outcomes? How do you know this / where do you get this information?

How could you assess the Learning Outcome?

■ Add an assessment mode which could be used to assess each learning outcome

■ Rate the assessment, considering:

- Time commitment for the lecturer
- Ease of feedback delivery
- Inclusivity
- Authenticity of the task



5 = meets all, 3 = meets some, 1 = would be challenging

What makes
a 'good'
assessment?



| Let's see how it feels to be a student...

Imagine there was a new numerical system you needed to teach students

You have 45 seconds to 'learn' the system

$1 =$ 


$2 =$ 

$3 =$ 

$4 =$ 

$5 =$ 

$6 =$ 

$7 =$ 

$8 =$ 

$9 =$ 

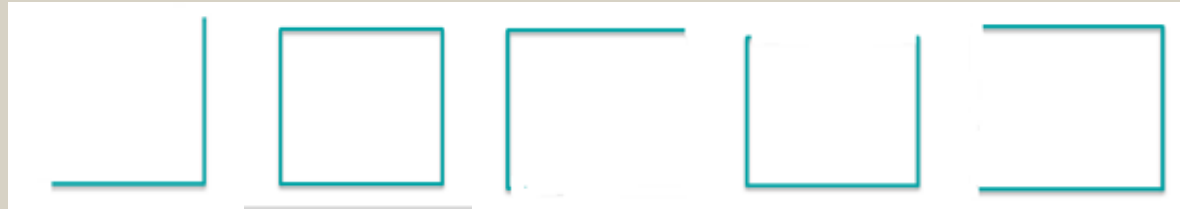
Test


Save this phone number in the new system

15924



| The phone number solution:





- What strategies did you use to try and memorise the symbols?

- Why do people find this task difficult or impossible?

| Does this help?

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

Re-test

What would this number be in the new system?

51274



| How did you do?



Learning

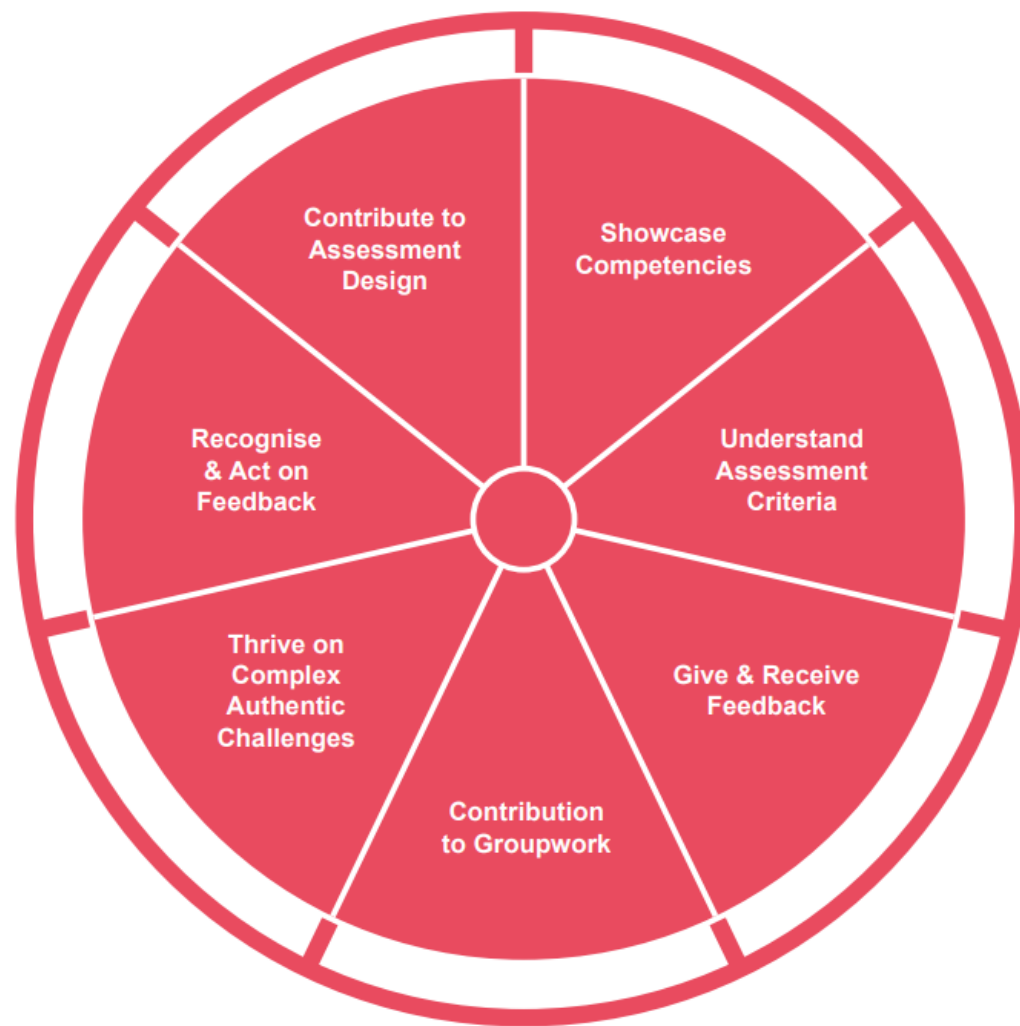
- Make sure it is clear **why** students need to learn this skills / approach
- Provide **clear input and practice before a test**: we associate new information with old or known information, or we build new information on top of old information. Scaffolding learning and allowing students to make connections is critical.
- **Consider the conditions of your test and how 'authentic' they are** - unrealistic time frames can be stressful; why would not allow students access to support materials (the grid) in the assessment?

What makes
a good
assessment?

Jisc's seven principles

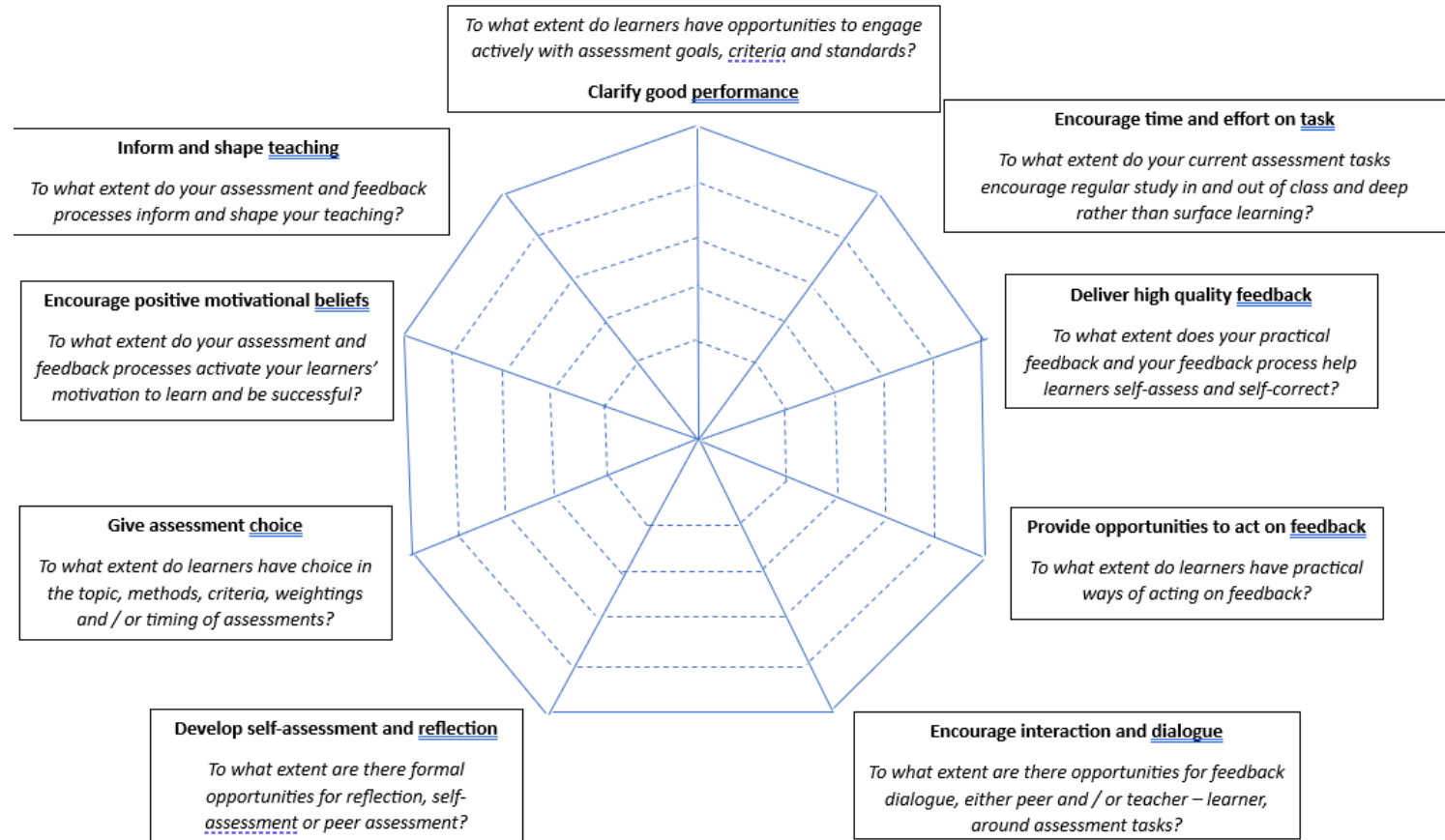
1. **Engage learners** with the requirements and performance criteria for each task
2. Support the **personalised needs** of learners
3. Foster **active learning**
4. Develop **autonomous learners** by encouraging self-generated feedback, self-regulation, reflection, dialogue and peer review
5. Manage staff and learner **workload** effectively
6. **Involve students in decision-making**
7. Promote **learner employability**

Student Success Framework: Students



Assessment audit

15 mins





Lunch: 45 mins

Recap

Key recommendations from the literature review:

Aim to incorporate at least one **high-impact practice** into each student's experience

Use, evaluate and refine **authentic** assessments

Explore social, ethical and behavioural interventions in relation to **academic integrity**, not just technical or legal solutions

Attend to the specific evidence-based requirements of each type of authentic assessment

Incorporate carefully designed **groupwork** across each student's programme

Shift the **culture of feedback** to emphasise and support students' use of it

Treat feedback as part of an **ongoing, positive relationship**, not a one-off event

Help students **understand** assessment criteria and standards

Be aware that students come with **different experiences** of, expectations of, and preparedness to learn from feedback

Increase opportunities for **peer assessment and peer feedback**

Scaffold support prior to and during episodes of peer feedback and peer assessment

Evaluate **educational technologies** in relation to the educational goals they support and principles they afford

How 'authentic' are our assessments?



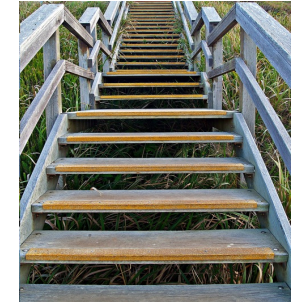
Relevant to future employment



Relevant to the advancement of the discipline



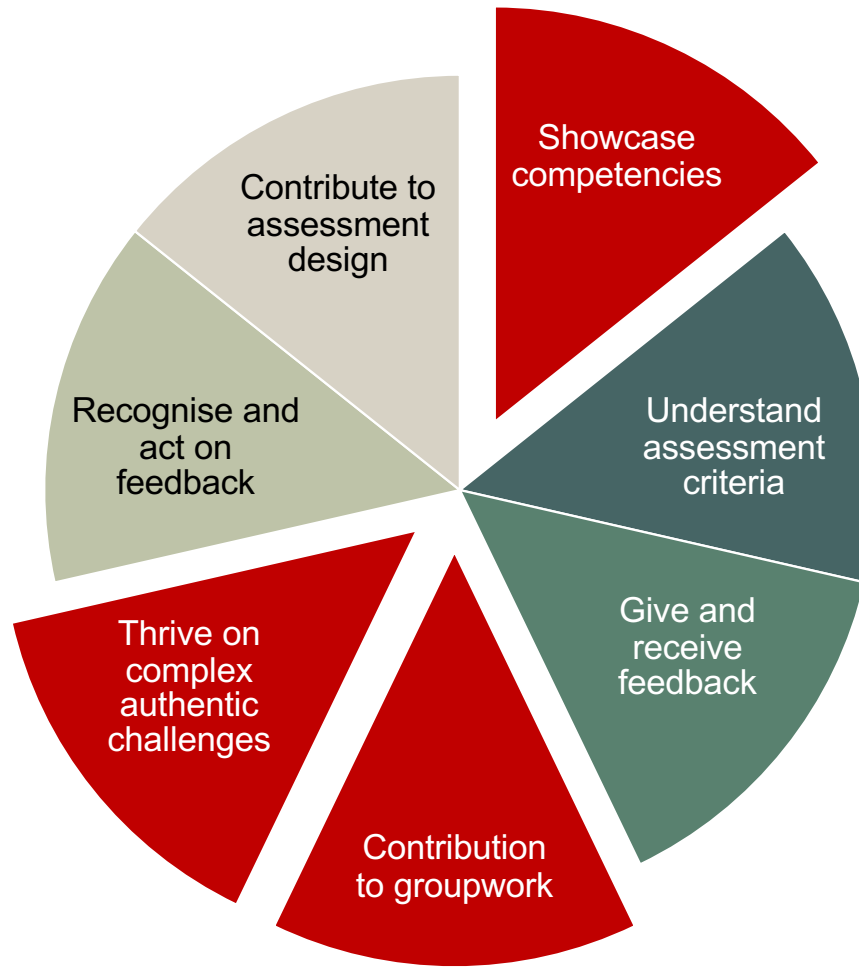
Relevant to our collective future



Relevant to individual aspiration

- Often mirrors real, complex challenges
 - Results in diverse outputs
- Equips students to work with uncertainty
- Causes students to reflect meaningfully on their learning
 - Focuses on 'process' as well as product

Authentic assessment



Knowledge, Skills, Understanding which all graduates should evidence

- A. Thinking critically/making judgements
- B. Solving problems/ developing plans
- C. Performing procedures/ demonstrating techniques
- D. Accessing & managing information
- E. Managing & developing oneself
- F. Demonstrating knowledge & understanding
- G. Designing, creating, performing
- H. Communicating

Graduate attributes

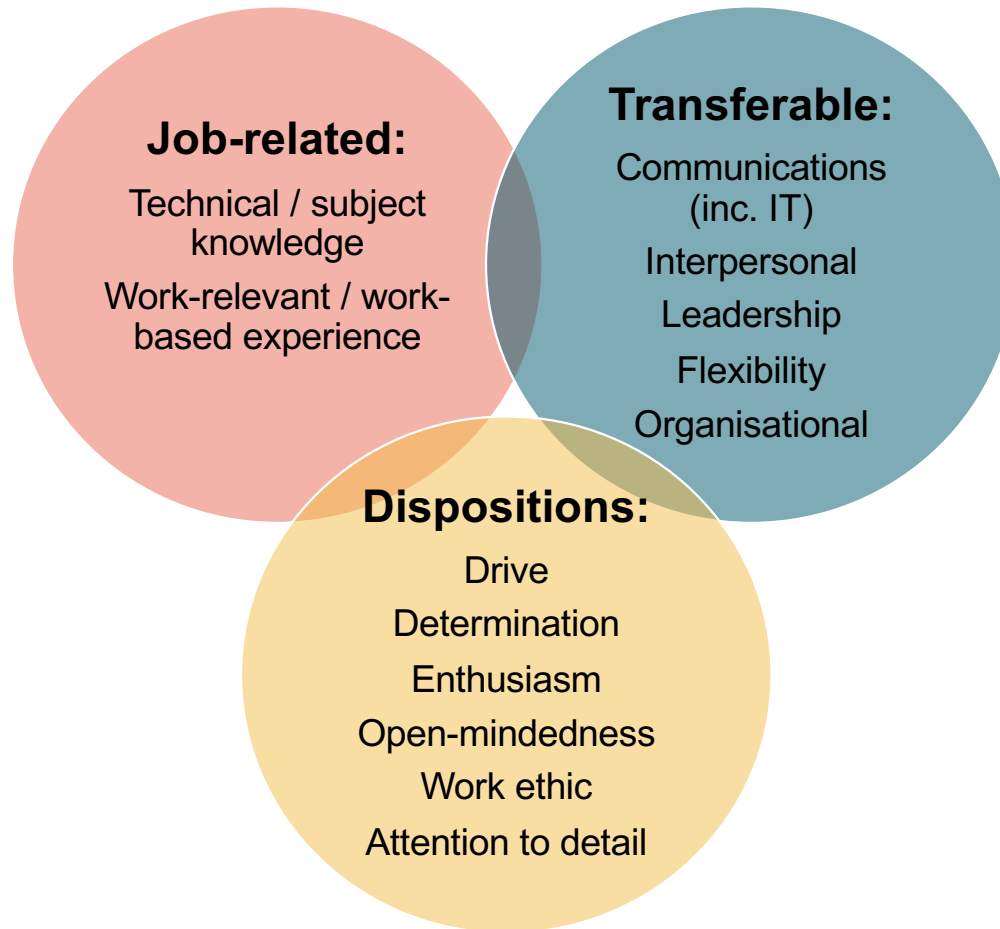
Innovative Assessment: Assessment should be **challenging, realistic** and **meaningful**.

■ What skills do your students need to develop to be successful on your course and beyond?

■ <https://answergarden.ch/4032951>



21st Century Graduate Attributes



Reflect and discuss

10 mins

- How do your assessments develop aspirational graduate skills and attributes? Are competencies explicitly assessed (or is knowledge prioritised?)
- How do you determine which skills should be prioritised (are employers or students consulted)?
- Have the employability-based skills or attributes changed since you have been teaching? How has this been addressed in your curriculum and assessment?

Sector
example:
BSc
Construction
Management

Module learning outcomes include:

- Understand the context in which construction management operates, including the legal; business; social; economic; health and safety; cultural; technological; physical; environmental; and global influences.
- Understand economic theory within the built environment, including resource allocation models; valuation methods; financial management; planning; construction industry economics; and business management.
- Evaluate and plan construction activities and undertake the process used to manage and control them.

Constructive alignment

Intended Learning Outcomes

What should students know or be able to do as a result of the course?

What activities are appropriate for students in order to develop the desired competencies?

How can students demonstrate they have acquired the desired level of competencies?

Learning and teaching activities

Assessment

Sector
example,
shared by
Brown and
Sambell
(2024)

Two days before assessment, task set to collate a list of risks inherent in building sites and outline feasible mitigations. This should include reference to appropriate sources, including at least two journal articles.

On assessment day, a series of emails sent from tutor:

Email 1: *In response to weather reports forecasting a typhoon in the locality within the next 24 hours, draw up an immediate plan of action to ensure the safety of the site and personnel. This should be submitted within two hours of receipt of this email.*

Email 2: *Police have advised that storm damage has resulted in slippage as shown on the enclosed diagrams. In your team, you are required to develop and submit within the hour a costed plan to alleviate the damage immediately.*

Email 3: *Within 10 hours, submit an incident report outlining causes for the landslide, and make recommendations for the avoidance of any similar events on this or other sites in the future.*

Consider:
How could
you assess
the Learning
Outcomes?

10 mins

■ Step 1: Add one of your module learning outcomes to the Padlet

■ Step 2: Once everyone has added a learning outcome, add ways in which this learning outcome could be assessed

■ Step 3: Use the 'like' button to indicate whether the suggested assessment mode matches what you do. Use the rating button to score each suggested assessment in terms of:

- Time commitment for the lecturer
- Ease of feedback delivery
- Inclusivity
- Authenticity of task

5 = meets all, 3 = meets some, 1 = would be challenging

Authentic assessment top trumps

Arnold
(2022)



1. Triple jump

- Challenge ★★★★★
- Product/performance ★★★★★
- Transfer of knowledge ★★★★★
- Metacognition ★★
- Recognisable by stakeholders ★★★
- Fidelity ★★★★★
- Feedback/discussion ★★★★★
- Collaboration ★★★
- Sustainability impact ★
- Staff demand ★★★★★



Students are presented with an open problem from within a professional area e.g. clinical case, or a farm business needing advice. The problem is often framed through a role play approach e.g. 'mock clinic' or 'a simulated farm visit'. The 'problem' should be 'open' and have multiple possible ways forward rather than a single answer. The assessment requires the student to go through three steps. 1. Meet the client or patient to establish the situation and ask any clarifying questions 2. Go away and do some research on the issue using any appropriate resources (2-3 hours) 3. Come back to the client or patient and present recommendations. Much of the literature around the triple jump is clinically based but consider how this format translates to different context e.g. surveying, architecture, human resources. Read more about this [recognised](#) method in literature.

Instructions

- In groups of four, you will be given a set of cards to review; divide the cards between your group members.
- Each card outlines an authentic assessment task. The star rating indicates one perspective on the characteristics of each assessment type.
- One group member selects a card to discuss. In your group, consider whether you agree with the star rating and if / how this assessment type may be used in your module.
- The next person in your group offers a card with a higher star rating in one element. Discuss possible application of the assessment in your module.
- Swap cards with another group.



Comfort break: 15 mins

Sector example: Fair use of AI

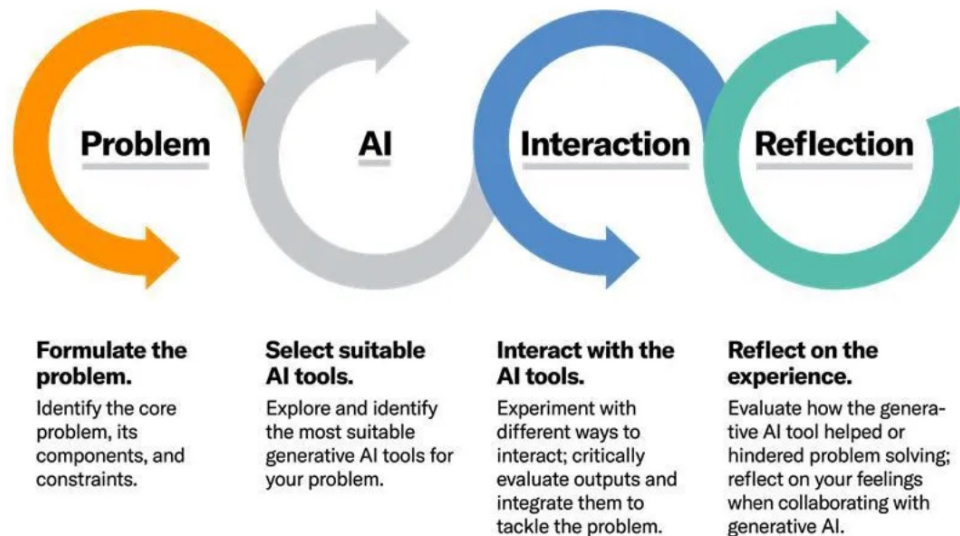
The [PAIR framework](#), developed by King's College London

Based on three tenets:

Human-centric: Viewing AI as a tool to augment, not replace, human insight, judgment and creativity.

Skill-centric: Focusing on the development of transferable skills (i.e. problem formulation, exploration, experimentation, critical thinking, and reflection) over mastering specific tools.

Responsibility-centric: Promoting effective and responsible use of generative AI tools.

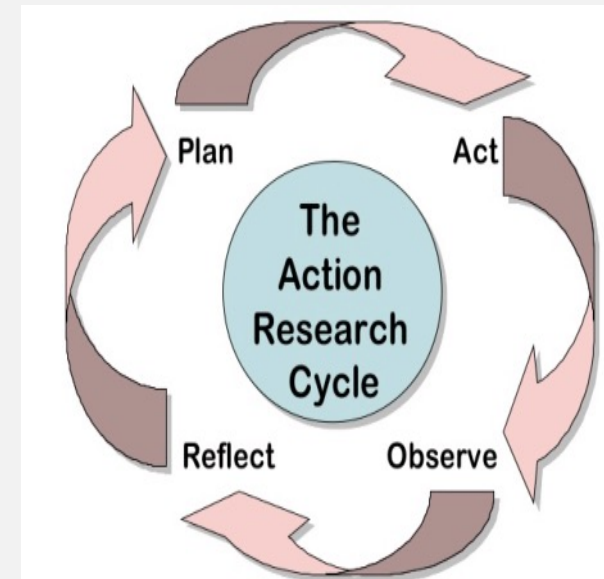


Reflect and prepare

5 mins

Individually, think of an issue you would like to investigate or improve in your practice:

- + *I would like to improve*
- + *I am unhappy about*
- + *What can I do about*?
- + *What can I do to change*?
- + *I am perplexed about*
- + *I would like to try*
- + *How can be applied to*?



https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Action-Research-Cycle-Source-Nelson-2014-The-four-stages-are-not-dissimilar-to-how_fig1_31915698

Plan your action research

Breakout groups of 3

Take turns in discussing the issue you identified

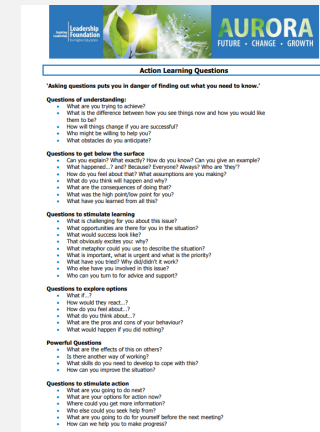
- + What is your AR question?
- + What change will you make?
- + How will you measure impact?

Each presenter gets 10 minutes:

- + Present your idea ~ 5 minutes
- + 5 minutes feedback and questions from group

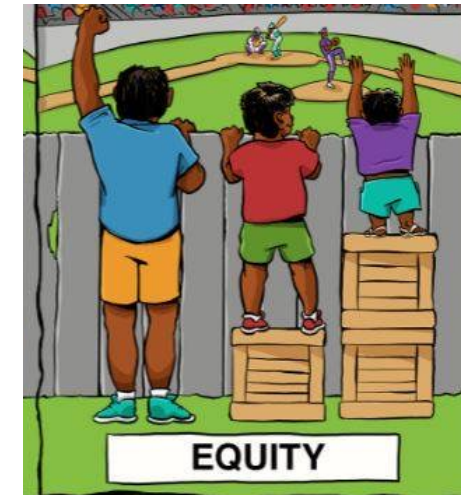
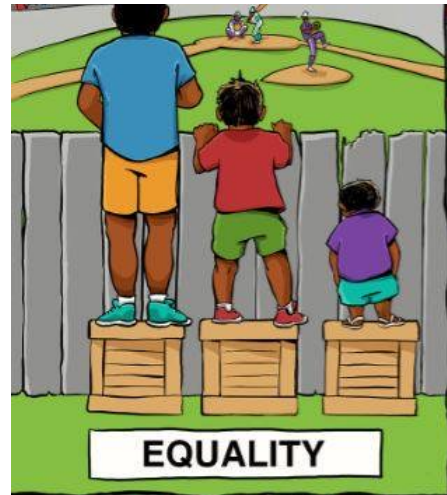
Plan and report back:

- + What are you going to do?
- + With whom?
- + When?
- + How?

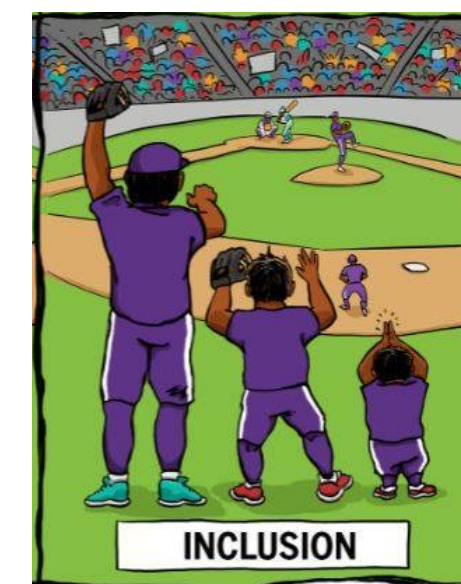
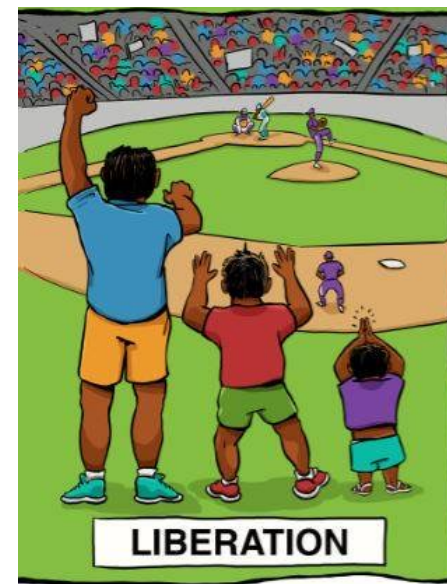


| What is 'inclusive' assessment?

‘Diversity is being asked to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance.’



Diversity?



Source: This version by [Angus Maguire](https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4) for IISC: see <https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4> for Craig Froehle's discussion of evolution and origins, and links to critiques.

Principle 2 Jisc, 2022

[Good assessment and feedback should...]“**support the personalised needs of learners: be accessible, inclusive and compassionate**”

- **Accessible:** (disability; digital divide)
- **Inclusive:** no ‘standard’ learner – helping all to demonstrate knowledge and competence (and challenging norms within academy)
- **Compassionate:** mental wellbeing, discretion.

We’ll be considering this in relation to **design** and **support** today, and **feedback** next time.

Disability

In UK higher education, we categorise disabled students into eight groups.

Students might:

- Have a **specific learning difficulty** (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, or AD(H)D
- Have a **social/communication impairment** such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum condition
- Have a **long-term illness** or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
- Have a **mental health condition**, such as depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, anorexia or bipolar disorder
- Have a **physical impairment** or mobility issues, such as difficulty using arms, manual dexterity issues, or using a wheelchair or crutches
- Be **Deaf** or have a serious hearing impairment
- Be **Blind** or have a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
- Have a disability, impairment or medical condition not listed above, such as a speech impairment or severe allergy

Prompt
questions for
adjustments:

Could I
do this...

- if I couldn't see it?
- if I couldn't hear it?
- if I couldn't speak quickly or fluently?
- using a keyboard instead of a mouse?
- if red and green looked the same to me?
- if I was stressed, fatigued, brain-fogged or unwell?
- if I struggled with reading or writing?
- without having to collaborate with people?
- if the content triggered memories of a traumatic event?

QAA Project (2022)



References

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