Welcome!
Transforming Assessment in Higher Education

Vic Stephenson
Day 1 – University of Rome Tor Vergata
February 2024
Introductions

Vic Stephenson,
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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.
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
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<td>Where we are: current research into assessment and feedback</td>
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<td>11:15 – 11:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>11:30 - 12:45</td>
<td>The how and what of assessment: what does ‘good’ assessment look like?</td>
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<td>12:45 – 1:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>How do we embed authenticity and lifelong learning in assessment?</td>
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<td>Break</td>
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<td>How do we ensure our assessments are inclusive?</td>
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<td>3:55 – 4:00</td>
<td>Wrap up and close</td>
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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
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**
- Staff are good at explaining things: 85%
- Staff have made the subject interesting: 85%
- The course is intellectually stimulating: 85%
- My course has challenged me to achieve my best work: 85%

**Learning opportunities**
- My course has provided me with opportunities to study specific ideas or concepts in depth: 85%
- My course has provided me with opportunities to link information and ideas together across different subjects: 85%
- My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt: 85%

**Assessment and feedback**
- The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance: 76%
- Marking and assessment has been fair: 76%
- Feedback on my work has been timely: 76%
- I have received helpful comments on my work: 76%
Why do we assess?

Traditional Assessment Pyramid

AS

FOR

OF

Assessment

Learning

Reconfigured Assessment Pyramid

OF

FOR

AS

Assessment

Learning
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 examplars 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?

Assure
- Assure that learning outcomes has been met

Build
- Build students’ capacity to judge their own learning

Enable
- Enable students to use information to aid their learning and development

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

Based on: Boud, D (2023) Positioning Assessment Differently in a World of Gen AI Digitally Enhanced Education webinar series, University of Kent
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 assessment? (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

- Staff Development
- Embedded in the Curriculum
- Innovative Assessment
- Systems, Processes and Policy
Student Success Framework: Students

- Contribute to Assessment Design
- Showcase Competencies
- Understand Assessment Criteria
- Give & Receive Feedback
- Contribution to Groupwork
- Thrive on Complex Authentic Challenges
- Recognise & Act on Feedback
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?
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).
Intended Learning Outcomes

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

Learning and teaching activities

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

Assessment

- How can students demonstrate they have acquired the desired level of competencies?
How would you teach and test the target language of telling the time in French?

Why had the students failed?
Reflect and discuss:
Constructive alignment

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

Adapted from: Perlman-Dee, P (2023) Active Engagement Assessments, delivered as part of the Active Learning Series
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.

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<th>Diagram</th>
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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?

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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?

Activity devised by Professor Claus Braband
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

- Contribute to Assessment Design
- Showcase Competencies
- Understand Assessment Criteria
- Give & Receive Feedback
- Contribution to Groupwork
- Thrive on Complex Authentic Challenges
- Recognise & Act on Feedback
- Advance HE
Assessment audit

15 mins

To what extent do learners have opportunities to engage actively with assessment goals, criteria and standards?

Clarify good performance

Inform and shape teaching
To what extent do your assessment and feedback processes inform and shape your teaching?

Encourage positive motivational beliefs
To what extent do your assessment and feedback processes activate your learners' motivation to learn and be successful?

Give assessment choice
To what extent do learners have choice in the topic, methods, criteria, weightings and/or timing of assessments?

Develop self-assessment and reflection
To what extent are there formal opportunities for reflection, self-assessment or peer assessment?

Encourage interaction and dialogue
To what extent are there opportunities for feedback dialogue, either peer and/or teacher – learner, around assessment tasks?

Encourage time and effort on task
To what extent do your current assessment tasks encourage regular study in and out of class and deep rather than surface learning?

Deliver high quality feedback
To what extent does your practical feedback and your feedback process help learners self-assess and self-correct?

Provide opportunities to act on feedback
To what extent do learners have practical ways of acting on feedback?
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

Arnold, 2022
Authentic assessment

- Showcase competencies
- Understand assessment criteria
- Give and receive feedback
- Contribution to groupwork
- Thrive on complex authentic challenges
- Recognise and act on feedback
- Contribute to assessment design
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
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

**Job-related:**
- Technical / subject knowledge
- Work-relevant / work-based experience

**Transferable:**
- Communications (inc. IT)
- Interpersonal
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Organisational

**Dispositions:**
- Drive
- Determination
- Enthusiasm
- Open-mindedness
- Work ethic
- Attention to detail

Sources: Reed and Indeed Employment Agencies
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?
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?

Learning and teaching activities

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

Assessment

How can students demonstrate they have acquired the desired level of competencies?
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 landslip, and make recommendations for the avoidance of any similar events on this or other sites in the future.*

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**Sector example, shared by Brown and Sambell (2024)**
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
1. Triple jump

- Challenge
- Productivity
- Transfer of knowledge
- Metacognition
- Recognizable 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 contexts e.g. surveying, architecture, human resources. Read more about this recognized method in literature.
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
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.

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**Problem**
- Formulate the problem.
  - Identify the core problem, its components, and constraints.

**AI**
- Select suitable AI tools.
  - Explore and identify the most suitable generative AI tools for your problem.

**Interaction**
- Interact with the AI tools.
  - Experiment with different ways to interact; critically evaluate outputs and integrate them to tackle the problem.

**Reflection**
- Reflect on the experience.
  - Evaluate how the generative AI tool helped or hindered problem solving; reflect on your feelings when collaborating with generative AI.
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 ........?
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.’

Source: This version by Angus Maguire 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.
[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.

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?
Embedding Inclusive Assessment
QAA, 2022

- Embeds support
- Enables personalisation
- Develops assessment literacy
- Fosters digital capabilities
- Provides formative opportunities
- Promotes authenticity
- Communicates meaningfully
- Requires reflection
- Considerate policies and processes

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