Assessment futures: the ‘final frontier’ for UK Higher Education – issues and possibilities.

Prof Peter Hartley
profpeter1@me.com
A quick intro: Peter Hartley

Now into my 3rd career:

- Career 1: lecturer. Academic in Communication Studies – from lecturer to department head to Professor of Communication.


Chapter with Ruth Whitfield in:

Supporting programme leaders and programme leadership

Edited by: Jenny Lawrence and Sam Ellis

3rd edition, in development with Sue Beckingham

Planned for 2019

http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415640282/


https://www.routledge.com/products/9781138854710
Personal assessment history.

- Practical innovation as lecturer, course leader.
- Writing regulations and strategies.
- E-portfolio implementation.
- Research (e.g. Higgins et al).
- Developing and establishing computer-aided assessment facility. (Jisc ITS4SEA project).
- Audio feedback. (Jisc ASEL project)
- PASS project (HEA NTFS project).
This session

- Why worry? Why change?
- Developments in assessment practice.
- A new framework for your consideration.

Leading into:

- Tomorrow’s workshop on programme assessment looking at detailed issues and specific approaches.
Final frontier? Why worry?
Some good news to start ..

- From a purely educational point of view, learners have never had it so good ... in terms of:
  - Access to learning and research resources.
  - Access to and use of technology.
  - Guidance and support.
  - Specific clarification of assessment criteria and assessment requirements/conventions.
  - Professionalism of teaching and support staff.
Final frontier?
We live in interesting times ...

Colleges hit by grade inflation row as EVERYONE gets a top degree on dozens of university courses

- More than 50 university courses across UK awarded students a First or 2:1
- Number achieving 2:1 or above has leapt over five years at some institutions
- Critics say grades have been pushed up as a 'marketing ploy'
- Universities said the rises reflected improvements in A-level grades

By JONATHAN PETRE FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY


And last month’s Guardian ...
22/10/18
The culture of university-bashing?

- Universities have never previously received the current level of media (trad and social) and public scrutiny.
- This will continue, given developments such as OfS.
And the latest ‘moral panic’

Piers Morgan, 53, ranted on Good Morning Britain on Tuesday after reading the news that Leeds Trinity University’s journalism department has ordered lecturers to stop using capital letters to avoid upsetting students. Pictured: Piers (left) with co-host Susanna Reid on GMB.

'The world has gone nuts!' Piers Morgan blasts university bosses who told lecturers not to use capital letters when setting students work to avoid upsetting them (and GMB viewers agree)

- Leeds Trinity University journalism department advised lecturers on the move
- Piers Morgan, 53, has criticised the news, saying it shows ‘the world’s gone nuts’
- He accused the students of not living in the ‘real world’ by being offended

By MOLLY ROSE PIKE FOR MAILONLINE
PUBLISHED: 11:06, 20 November 2018 | UPDATED: 12:33, 20 November 2018

Piers Morgan vented his fury over a university issuing instructions to lecturers to avoid using capital letters when assigning work to students - for fear of upsetting them.

The memo sent out to staff at Leeds Trinity journalism department suggested that using uppercase letters may ‘scare them into failure’, according to the Express.

Piers, 53, was baffled when he read out the news on ITV’s Good Morning Britain on Tuesday, declaring that ‘the world’s gone nuts’ and accused students of not living in the ‘real world’.

GMB viewers agreed with the presenter’s take on the move, with one tweeting: ‘You couldn’t make it up!’
And note the language of the public debate ...

Universities fix results in 'race for firsts'
University examination results are being manipulated to increase the number of first-class degrees awarded, a study suggests.

British universities bend their rules to award more firsts

The number of first-class and 2:1 degrees awarded has soared in recent years (Charlie Newham)

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/10180093/Universities-fix-results-in-race-for-firsts.html

https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/british-universities-bend-their-rules-to-award-more-firsts-06kv3r2mdpV
How much change already in our assessment practices?

**Then**
- Emphasis on judgement.
- Assessment criteria largely ‘hidden’ from students.
- Dominant types: examination and written assignment.
- Assessment feedback typically written comments.
- Termly progress reviews – could discuss individuals.
- Little scholarly attention.
- Marks usually in range: 30-75.

**Now (and potential)**
Then and Now compared … for assessment practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Then</th>
<th>Now (and potential)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on judgment.</td>
<td>Growing focus re AfL/development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment criteria largely \‘hidden\’ from students.</td>
<td>Assessment criteria typically published (but are they understood?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant types: examination and written assignment.</td>
<td>2 types still dominant; many more techniques available (e.g. online).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment feedback typically written comments.</td>
<td>Assessment feedback typically written (other media available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termly progress reviews – could discuss individuals.</td>
<td>Semester assessment board – focus on procedure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little scholarly attention.</td>
<td>Growing research/evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks usually in range: 30-75.</td>
<td>Marks can now range to 100.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And so?

- Are our assessment policies and practices suitably robust and ‘future-proof’?
What did we learn from the quiz?

Reasons to be worried #1

- We tend to take for granted basic features of the assessment system (which actually date back centuries). Still fit for purpose?
- Some characteristics of assessment are interpreted very differently.
- Significant variations in policies and practices between institutions.
- Significant variations between disciplines.
- Significant variations between assessors.
A key text


Thanks to James Wisdom for researching this.
A key text


- Roman Catholic University of Louvain, 1441.
  - First class - Rigorosi (Honour-men).
  - Second Transibiles (Pass-men).
  - Third Gratiosi (Charity-passes).
  - “A fourth class, not publicly announced, contained the names of those who could not be passed on any terms”.

Thanks to James Wisdom for researching this.
And a bit more history

“Since 1785, when one professor at Yale wrote in his notebook that 58 of his seniors were Optimi, second Optimi, Inferiores and Pejores, school wasn’t the same again.”

From a discussion of different grading systems across the world at:
https://www.mastersportal.com/articles/2291/8-university-grading-systems-around-the-world-that-may-or-may-not-be-weird.html
ARE WE ‘STUCK’ IN OUR PERCEPTIONS/ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ASSESSMENT?
The ‘stickiness’ of perception: what do you see?

http://www.moillusions.com/what-does-this-black-white-photo-show/
Why worry #2

- What is assessment for?
What is assessment for? What are its functions?

From David Carless (2015)

A. ‘support student learning’
B. ‘judge quality of student achievement’
C. ‘accountability’

From Gibbs (1999)

A. ‘capturing student time’
B. ‘generating student activity’
C. ‘providing feedback’
D. ‘students internalise standards’
E. ‘generating marks’
F. ‘evidence for others’
Assessment literacy means …?

Smith et al (2013)*
- ‘students understanding of rules’
- ‘use of assessment to further their learning’
- ‘ability to work within the guidelines/standards’

Price et al (2012)*
- ‘appreciation of relationship – assessment and learning’
- ‘conceptual understanding of assessment’
- ‘understanding assessment criteria’
- ‘skills re peer/self-assessment’
- ‘familiarity with techniques’
- ‘ability to select/apply appropriate task approaches’

* From Carless 2015 who adds: understanding attribution and plagiarism
Are these definitions sufficient?
The big question?

- Do students learn sufficiently from their assessment experience?

OR

- Do students predominantly learn the ‘algorithms for degree success’?
The big question?

- Do students learn sufficiently from their assessment experience?
- As a result of their assessment and feedback experience, can/do they self-evaluate the qualities they may need for their future professional development?
Why worry #3: changing contexts.

For an introduction to his ideas, see the TED talk at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eBmyttcfU4
Then and Now compared … for assessment practices.

Then

- Emphasis on judgment.
- Assessment criteria largely ‘hidden’ from students.
- Dominant types: examination and written assignment.
- Assessment feedback typically written comments.
- Termly progress reviews – could discuss individuals.
- Little scholarly attention.
- Marks usually in range: 30 - 75.

Now (and potential)

- Growing focus re AfL /development.
- Assessment criteria typically published (but are they understood?)
- 2 types still dominant; many more techniques available (e.g. online).
- Assessment feedback typically written (other media available)
- Semester assessment board – focus on procedure?
- Growing research/evaluation.
- Marks can now range to 100.

‘Talent is always jagged.’

Todd Rose, p. 89
Why worry #4: The robots are coming?

Managing Automation
Employment, inequality and ethics in the digital age

Discussion Paper
Mathew Lawrence, Carys Roberts and Loren King

FIGURE 1.6
For 60 per cent of all occupations, at least 30 per cent of activities can be technically automated
Proportion of activities within an existing occupation that can be technically automated with existing technology, US

Source: McKinsey 2017
And the HE response could/should be?

of tomorrow. The second side of humanics, therefore, is not a set of content areas but rather a set of cognitive capacities. These are higher-order mental skills—mindsets and ways of thinking about the world. The first is systems thinking, the ability to view an enterprise, machine, or subject holistically, making connections between its different functions in an integrative way. The second is entrepreneurship, which applies the creative mindset to the economic and often social sphere. The third is cultural agility, which teaches students how to operate deftly in varied global environments and to see situations through different, even conflicting, cultural lenses. The fourth capacity is that old chestnut of liberal arts programs, critical thinking, which instills the habit of disciplined, rational analysis and judgment.
Can you recommend the future-proof job or ‘career’?

The Graduate "One Word: Plastics"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSxihhBzCjk
Reasons to be cheerful: new inspirations

- Significant initiatives:
  - JISC Assessment and Feedback Programme
  - AdvanceHE/HEA projects and publications
  - Scottish Enhancement Themes
  - CETLs (ASKe and AfL)

- Growth in research and publications
  - e.g. Sue Bloxham, David Boud, David Carless, Nancy Falchikov, Dai Hounsell, David Nicol, Margaret Price, David Sadler et al
A Marked Improvement has been developed by a group of experts, working with the HEA to provide a strong rationale for transforming assessment in higher education. It includes an assessment review tool, offering a practical method to take stock of current practice and look to a targeted approach to strategic change. The publication also includes further resources for staff, which can be used to support changes to assessment policy and practice.

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/marked-improvement
The framework provides a clear structure and process to rethink and reframe assessment policy and practice.

This framework has been designed to engage and support a process of enquiry-based and evidence-informed change in practice and policy.

Find the Transforming Assessment Framework along with toolkits and resources here:
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/frameworks-toolkits/frameworks
HEA Framework – 6 tenets

1. **Promoting assessment for learning** – moving beyond achievement of learning outcomes onto demonstration of higher order learning and integration of knowledge

2. **Ensuring assessment is fit for purpose** – achievement of programme outcomes through a variety of routes reflecting ability at the end of a programme not accumulation of marks

3. **Recognising that as an exercise assessment lacks precision** – cannot set out precisely all meaningful learning or assessment outcomes

4. **Constructing standards in and through communities** – developing standards within the discourse and practices (WTP) of the appropriate disciplines and professions.

5. **Integrating assessment literacy into course design** – encouraging an active educational community in which students are contributing partners

6. **Ensuring professional judgements are reliable** – sharing and demonstrating professional judgements regarding assessment standards is the prime responsibility of discipline or subject communities
Assessment and feedback in higher education

A review of literature for the Higher Education Academy

Brad Jackel, Jacob Pearce, Ali Radloff and Daniel Edwards

In partnership with: Australian Council for Educational Research
And more new ideas?
Assessment-led alignment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not recommended</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Highly Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional syllabus-led approach</strong>&lt;br&gt;(may be emergent)</td>
<td><strong>Conventional approach to aligned course design</strong>&lt;br&gt;(pre-planned)</td>
<td><strong>Assessment-led approach to aligned course design</strong>&lt;br&gt;(pre-planned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct a syllabus</td>
<td>Define the learning outcomes</td>
<td>Decide what students must demonstrate they can do via assessment tasks; write assessment criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver learning and teaching activities that enable the students to cover the syllabus</td>
<td>Select learning and teaching activities likely to enable the students to attain the outcomes</td>
<td>Select learning and teaching activities (including formative assessments) likely to enable the students to successfully complete the assessment tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess students’ attainment of syllabus items</td>
<td>Design assessments to measure the students’ achievement of the learning outcomes</td>
<td>Finalise the learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘start [by] thinking in terms of evidence of achievement. It’s really helpful to students to know what success looks like. Then, in a nutshell, work backwards towards the intended outcomes for which this evidence is valid, and how best to measure reliably students’ achievement, and the criteria which will set the standards for this achievement. Then go backwards and forwards until the whole lot are in harmony. It’s an iterative business’ (Race, undated, page 1).

Edwards, Corony (2017) *Assessment and feedback guidance for staff* (unpublished) prepared for the University of Lincoln’s Educational Development and Enhancement Unit by Corony Edwards Consulting [www.coronyedwards.co.uk](http://www.coronyedwards.co.uk)
And new research

“the practice of module design and review is situation-informed rather than evidence-informed or theory-informed.” (p.214)
And a final worry #5
Don’t we need to change?

- What do our graduates really need these days and for the future?
  - changes in expectations and demands from employers?
  - “a new discourse of assessment in HE is required … should focus on the key organising idea of informing judgement”
    (Boud and Falchikov, 2007)
Sustainable assessment?
(Boud and Soler, 2016)

- Assessment ‘that meets the needs of the present and [also] prepares students to meet their own future learning needs’
- The key elements of developing informed judgement from the perspective of the students were proposed as:
  - (1) identifying oneself as an active learner;
  - (2) identifying one’s own level of knowledge and the gaps in this;
  - (3) practising testing and judging;
  - (4) developing these skills over time; and
  - (5) embodying reflexivity and commitment.
So where do we go from here?
Where have we been #1

The changing context of assessment in UK HE: a speculative model
Peter Hartley and Ruth Whitfield, June 2018.
Where have we been #2
A personal history.

Timeline

1960s
1970s
1980s

The Course

Organising focus

was

The Age of 'Mystery'

characterised by

How assessment is managed and delivered

Aims and content dominant in curriculum design
Assessment criteria implicit
Little discussion re assessment with students
Assessment at endpoint of curriculum design

Module learning outcomes dominant
Assessment criteria more explicit
Some discussion with students
Assessment at endpoint of curriculum design

The Age of 'Lego'

characterised by

Learning outcomes more variable/challenged
Focus on feedback & assessment literacy
Concerns for assessment environment
Assessment still at endpoint of curriculum design

The age of 'Reflective Lego'

characterised by

Module learning outcomes dominant
Assessment criteria more explicit
Some discussion with students
Assessment at endpoint of curriculum design

The changing context of assessment in UK HE: a speculative model
Peter Hartley and Ruth Whitfield, June 2018.

From mid 90s

definition

changed to

Modules and semesters

and on to

Last 5/10 years?

???
Where to go? Rejuvenating assessment strategy

- **Assessment strategy**
  - should define
  - Focus of assessment
    - will provide evidence for
      - Assessment feedback
        - should generate
      - Assessment methods and media
        - should suggest
Investigating Assessment Strategy

PASS website: https://www.bradford.ac.uk/pass/

TESTA website: http://www.testa.ac.uk
NB As well as this keynote from Tansy Jessop, see other examples of TESTA implementation/development in the Spring 2016 SEDA Conference Programme. And two other excellent keynotes by Margaret Price and Ian Pirie.

TESTA project findings:

“consistent relationships between characteristics of assessment and student learning responses, including a strong relationship between quantity and quality of feedback and a clear sense of goals and standards, and between both these scales and students’ overall satisfaction.”

- Tansy Jessop, Yassein El Hakim & Graham Gibbs (2013): The whole is greater than the sum of its parts: a large-scale study of students’ learning in response to different programme assessment patterns, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education.*
### Assessment environment: key dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varieties of assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of examinations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to return marks &amp; feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume of oral feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume of written feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment environment: range of variation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summative</td>
<td>12 - 227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative</td>
<td>0 - 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varieties of assessment</td>
<td>5 - 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of examinations</td>
<td>0% - 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to return marks &amp; feedback</td>
<td>10 - 42 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume of oral feedback</td>
<td>37 - 1800 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume of written feedback</td>
<td>936 - 22,000 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slide from Tansy Jessop keynote, SEDA 2016.
Formative assessment: missing in action in both research-intensive and teaching focused universities?

Qi Wu and Tansy Jessop

Solent Learning and Teaching Institute (SLTI), Southampton Solent University, Southampton, UK

ABSTRACT
In this study, we analysed survey data from 386 third year undergraduate students on 14 programmes within three UK universities. The universities are characterised as teaching-focused or research-intensive: a ‘plate-glass’ and ‘red-brick’ research-intensive; and a ‘new’ teaching-intensive university. We used the Assessment Experience Questionnaire Version 4.0 (AEQ 4.0), designed to understand students’ perceptions of programme assessment environments. The AEQ contains scales constructed from theories about assessment, feedback and deep learning. We performed exploratory factor analysis on AEQ 4.0 and identified five salient domains: how students learn; quality of feedback; internalisation of standards; student effort; and formative assessment. These domains were compared across the three universities. Formative assessment was the weakest domain in all three university assessment environments, followed closely by students’ internalising standards. Students at the new teaching-focused university had significantly higher scores on scales about deep learning, student effort and the quality of feedback than students in the two research-intensives. Findings show that theories about the virtue of formative assessment have yet to play out in practice; and that the teaching-focused university seemed to be encouraging deeper approaches to learning through its feedback and assessment tasks.
More from Tansy et al


Programme-focussed assessment: PASS project

- NTFS group project over 3 years:
  - Two years of development and investigation and one year of implementation.

- Consortium:
  - Led by Bradford;
  - 2 CETLs – ASKE and AfL.
  - Plus Exeter, Plymouth and Leeds Met.
  - Plus critical friends.

- www.pass.brad.ac.uk
The PASS project
What do we mean by PFA? #1

“the assessment is specifically designed to address major programme outcomes rather than very specific or isolated components of the course. It follows then that such assessment is integrative in nature, trying to bring together understanding and skills in ways which represent key programme aims. As a result, the assessment is likely to be more authentic and meaningful to students, staff and external stakeholders.”

From the PASS Position Paper –
http://www.pass.brad.ac.uk/position-paper.pdf
What do we mean by PFA? #2

Varieties of PFA

- High
  - Extent to which assessment covers all the specified programme outcomes
  - Typical module assessment

Weighting of the assessment in the final qualification

Low → High
What do we mean by PFA? #3

Varieties of PFA

- Extent to which assessment covers all the specified programme outcomes

- Weighting of the assessment in the final qualification

- Personal evidence against programme outcomes

- Final heavily weighted integrative assessment

- Integrative level/year assessment

- Integrative semester/term assessment

- Weighting of the assessment in the final qualification
Do you PASS?

Programme-based/focussed Assessment

can be achieved in different ways, including:

- Submission of evidence (e.g. in portfolio) to demonstrate performance and/or critical reflection
- Integrative assignments across time/stages and/or subject areas
- Integrative projects
- Help to overcome the issues associated with modular programmes
- Help to enhance both subject/disciplinary achievement and/or employability prospects
- Help to develop and maintain cohesive programmes
- Help to specifically design to address programme outcomes
- Help to demonstrate that course/programme outcomes have been achieved
- Help to be more meaningful for all stakeholders (including students, staff, professions, disciplinary community, employers etc.)
### Integrated programme assessment: Biomed Sciences at Brunel

#### Assessment Blocks (120 cr)
- Research Skills & Communication (20)
- Practical Skills 1 - Microscopy (20)
- Practical Skills 2 - Biochemical Analysis (20)
- Practical Skills 3 - Molecular Analysis (20)
- Exam 1: Biomedical Sciences 1 (20)
- Exam 2: Synoptic Exam 1 (20)

#### Study Blocks (120 cr)
- Anatomy & Physiology (20)
- Biochemistry (20)
- Biology of the Cell (40)
- Critical Thinking 1 (5)
- Research Skills (15)
- Practical Skills (20)

**BSc BioSciences Level 1 Structure**
Some key features*

- Biomedical Sciences
  - Study and assessment blocks in all years.
  - Cut assessment load by 2/3rds; generated more time for class contact.
  - Synoptic exam in all three years.

*To be discussed in tomorrow’s workshop
Biosciences win CATE award

Brunel University London

A team of 16 academics teaching on the BSc Biomedical Sciences programmes came together to eliminate the compartmentalised approach to learning experienced by students on modular programmes and to reduce the assessment load for staff and students.

The team consisted of staff from all levels within Biosciences. Some were recently appointed probationary academics whilst others were more experienced senior lecturers, readers and professors. Integrated Programme Assessment (IPA) takes a holistic and authentic approach to assessment that requires links to be made between subject topics, facilitates integration and application of knowledge and ensures that graduates are able to evaluate, communicate and make use of complex information.
And the stats for Brunel

Seen in improved KPI metrics between 2013 (pre-change) and 2015 (all graduating students followed new assessment structures)

- NSS scores for Assessment and Feedback and Personal Development increased from 73 to 79% and from 82 to 87%, respectively, and the national subject ranking (2016) for Biosciences is 5th for Assessment and Feedback and 3rd for Personal Development;
- Students achieving good degrees increased by ~15%;
- Graduate-level employment increased by 18%;
- Students feel better prepared for employment.

Extract from https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/awards/integrated-programme-assessment/About
And now a practical guide

- Includes:
  - useful workshop activities.
  - examples of integrated assignments.

Integrated Programme Assessment
A Practical Guide

AMANDA HARVEY, DAVID TREE, MARIANN RANK-WEAVER

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

https://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/awards/integrated-programme-assessment
General reflections on PFA

- Benefits both staff and students.
- Needs cohesive course team.
- Needs management support.
- Needs a flexible approach to suit the course.
- Not a ‘quick fix’.
- And you cannot just change assessment:
  - Implications for teaching/delivery.
  - Implications for regulatory framework.
What is the impact of Programme-focussed/based Assessment?

depends on

institution

other stakeholders

professional bodies

supportive and flexible institutional regulations

creative use of assessment regulations

can have positive impact on

staff

students

better collaboration

workload

satisfaction

performance

motivation/relevance

validity/authenticity

new 'mindset'

team approach to curriculum design

maintaining focus on programme over time
Programme assessment: other UK examples

Strong public commitment, e.g. University of Sheffield

Plus several institutions exploring/piloting

Innovative Curriculum Design: Taking a programme level approach to enhance student experience

Introduction to the Learning and Teaching Conference 2018

Wyn Morgan introduces the theme for the Twelfth Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, which was held on Tuesday 9 January 2018 in the Students' Union Building.

Find out more
Rethinking assessment feedback – what do we mean?

- The ‘original’ meaning of feedback: ‘enabling self-correcting behaviour towards a known goal.’

- This involves the ‘feedback loop’ whereby information must be ‘fed back’ so that it:
  - relates to the goal.
  - is received.
  - is correctly interpreted.
  - enables corrective action.
Rethinking assessment
feedback – what do we mean?

- The ‘original’ meaning of feedback: ‘enabling self-correcting behaviour towards a known goal.’
- This involves the ‘feedback loop’ whereby information must be ‘fed back’ so that it:
  - relates to the goal.
  - is received.
  - is correctly interpreted.
  - enables corrective action.
- For our students, what is ‘the goal’? And how do we create the feedback loop?
Factors Affecting Feedback Engagement: thematic analysis of research literature

- Students unable to understand feedback or apply it.
- The problems with feedforward.
- The problems with assessment criteria and feedback.
- Tutors (4a) and students (4b) not being explicitly trained to develop and use criteria and apply feedback.
- Lack of dialogue around feedback.
- Impacts of modularisation and course design on feedback engagement.
- Psychological factors affecting feedback engagement.
- The lack of student self-assessment and self-regulation and its effect of feedback use and engagement.

Factors Affecting Feedback Engagement (V3)

Claire Moscrop & Peter Hartley, 2018
Further development planned for 2019.
Assessment as communication?
A need for further exploration.

- ‘authentic’ assignments
  - How do we define meaningful tasks?

- Defining audience for assignments.
  - Specific audience. (and defeating the ‘essay mills’)
  - Do our students know who they are writing for/to?
  - Is this why/how ‘dialogic feedback’ works?

- Using a range of media to improve communication of feedback, e.g. audio/video feedback.
Reflections on audio feedback as communication (Peter Hartley)

**is audio a 'better' or different form of communication?**

- does need the written grid to supply the judgement
- supports an interactive approach to communication
- establishes or confirms the relationship

**what was my personal style?**

- did not edit the recording
- paused recording if necessary
- recorded in one take
- used consistent overall structure
- prepared by reading assignment and making short notes

**what was the technology?**

- Now: Olympus dictation device (easy to use)
- next time: the iPad or Touch?
- considering embedding audio comments in Word

**outcomes**

- generated much more feedback (ranged from 5-15 minutes; up to 100wpm)
- was able to give much more detailed explanations
- did not save time; did spend about the same

- Some very positive unsolicited quotes from students including: "best feedback I have received in my life"
Assessment as communication?

Giving students the necessary support: 3 key questions (after David Sadler)

a. Do you know what good work looks like?

b. Do you know what your work is ‘worth’?

c. Do you know how to get from b to a?

NB Some really good ways of supporting this: e.g. the work by Kay Sambell and Sally Brown which you can download from: [https://sally-brown.net/2016/05/12/stimulating-supportive-environment-seda-conference-three-cheers-ntf-2016/](https://sally-brown.net/2016/05/12/stimulating-supportive-environment-seda-conference-three-cheers-ntf-2016/)
An initiative well worth exploring: 3 slides from Naomi W instone and Emma Medland, SEDA Conference November 2018: Educational Development Initiative of the Year

The FEATS e-portfolio

FEATS
Feedback Engagement and Tracking at Surrey
Act upon and track the impact of your feedback

Section A: Feedback Review and Synthesis Tool
Section B: Skill Development tool
Section C: Action Planning Tool

The FEATS e-portfolio

https://tinyurl.com/FEATSPortfolio
The Impact

30 MINUTES
AVERAGE VISIT TIME PER STUDENT

“Before FEATS, the feedback process for many students stopped after reading their feedback. Now students can take control of their learning and drive their own development.”

Learning Developer

“You use your feedback better by using FEATS. It helps you stay focused and ready to do what’s next rather than sitting and worrying about the grade”

UG Student

“In the past I’ve struggled to put my feedback into action, whereas FEATS provides real guidance on how to identify your strengths and weaknesses and then points you to resources to develop your skills. The process feels very organic and personalized.”

UG Student

Can a feedback e-portfolio empower students to synthesise and use feedback?

3500 ACTIVE USERS
OUT OF 5000 STUDENTS IN PILOT YEAR
The Impact

“FEATS has taught me that it is essential for us to take responsibility for our own learning.”

**UG Student**

“As a result of this project, staff have developed their feedback practice by focusing on feedback as a conversation that develops students’ self-regulation, not just as a justification of the grade”

**Academic Developer**

“By using FEATS, I have been able to understand and overcome weaknesses in my writing”

**UG Student**

**SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN FEEDBACK LITERACY**

**RELATIVE TO CONTROL GROUP**

- **FEATS**
  - $t(11) = 0.55, p = .60, d = 0.14$
  - $t(30) = 2.34, p = .03, d = 0.43$

- **Control**
  - $t(30) = 2.34, p = .03, d = 0.43$
  - $t(11) = 0.55, p = .60, d = 0.14$

**Can this approach develop the feedback literacy of staff and students?**
And finally ... remembering the assessment/identity interface

Students as ‘conscientious consumers’ (Higgins et al, 2002).

- "While recognising the importance of grades, many of the students in the study adopt a more 'conscientious' approach. They are motivated intrinsically and seek feedback which will help them to engage with their subject in a 'deep' way."

But: personal identity as ‘mediator’.

- e.g. apprentice (‘feedback is useful tool’) cf. victim (‘feedback is another burden’).

So we need to change the mindsets of some students?
Rejuvenating assessment strategy - overview

- Assessment strategy
  - Focus of assessment
    - Assessment feedback
    - Assessment methods and media
Rejuvenating assessment strategy – supporting details

**Focus of assessment**

- Programme Focus (PFA or IPA)
- Graduate attributes; top-level characteristics

**Assessment feedback**

- Feedback system e.g. FEATS
- Feedback media
- Assessment literacy

**Assessment methods and media**

- Assessment environment (TESTA)
- Media and formats
- Choice and flexibility
And where are we going?

**Timeline**
- 1960s, 1970s, 1980s
- From mid 90s
- Last 5/10 years?
- In some Univs/ courses
- From 2010...

**Organising focus**
- The Course
- Modules and semesters
- and on to?

**Influences**
- The Age of Mystery
- The Age of Lego
- The age of Reflective Lego

**How assessment is managed and delivered**
A final model to ponder

Programme Learning outcomes become the focus.

Assessment literacy linked to students' personal and professional development.

Feedback is 'cumulative feedforward', based on dialogue.

Assessment as an integral concern in curriculum (re)design from outset.

The changing context of assessment in UK HE: a speculative model
Peter Hartley and Ruth Whitfield, June 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsxGUJh-SY
Your turn:
Some key questions

- Which ideas and principles of PFA are most important and relevant to your context?
- How can you use PFA principles/techniques to develop your assessment practices?
- How/where are you going to start with PFA?
- What further support/info would be useful from initiatives like PASS?
Any final questions/comments

- Thank you for your participation

- Prof Peter Hartley
  profpeter@btinternet.com
  or
  profpeter1@me.com
Specific references on PASS


Selected references/sources #1

Some sources which have inspired/helped me, in addition to projects already mentioned like Testa and ASKe.

Selected references & sources#2

- David Nicol - http://www.reap.ac.uk/Contacts/DavidNicol.aspx
Selected references & sources

Assessment as a means of focussing student effort and enhancing achievement

Northumbria University
6th April 2016
Sally Brown
PFHEA, SFSEDA, NTF
Emerita Professor, Leeds Beckett University
Visiting Professor: University of Plymouth, Liverpool John Moores University and University of South Wales.

Also worth checking the website of Phil Race: https://phil-race.co.uk
Some final thoughts from me

