The changing face of assessment and feedback
How technology can make a difference
Overview

» The assessment and feedback landscape
» Feedback and feedforward
» Assessment and employability
» Electronic assessment management
» From challenge to change: a principled approach

The full story
Programme Report: http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/5450/
Context

» Jisc Assessment and Feedback Programme (2011 – 2014)
» 20 projects and over 30 institutions across the UK, involving 2,200 staff and 6,000 students
» 3 strands of activity: institutional change, research and technology transfer
» Exploring large-scale changes to assessment and feedback practice through technology

www.jisc.ac.uk/assessmentandfeedback
The assessment and feedback landscape
Challenges
Strategy and policy

» Formal strategy/policy documents lag behind current thinking

» Educational principles are rarely enshrined in strategy/policy

» Devolved responsibility makes it difficult to achieve parity of learner experience

Challenges
Learners, staff, and employers

» Learners are not often actively engaged in developing practice

» Perception that learners are not making use of feedback provided

» Assessment and feedback practice does not reflect the reality of working life

» Administrative staff are often left out of the dialogue
Challenges
Assessment and feedback practice

» Traditional forms such as essays/exams still predominate

» Timeliness of feedback is an issue

» Curriculum design issues inhibit longitudinal development
From challenge to change

»How are institutions addressing these challenges?
Feedback and ‘feedforward’

Assessment practice
Longitudinal development: feeding forward

» Feed forward
» Ipsative approaches
» Technology needed to support information sharing
Curriculum Design: scheduling

PG Certificate in Medical Education

Revised PG Certificate in Medical Education

- Formative assessment
- Medium stakes assessment
- High stakes assessment

University of Dundee course redesign using University of Herfordshire assessment timelines tool
Feedback is…..
A conversation

“Staff have found the dialogue with students energising and the acknowledgement that students are learning from the feedback satisfying. Tutors have also learned from students’ comments in the dialogue – demonstrating reciprocal learning”

http://www.flickr.com/photos/khalidalbaih/5653817859
Analysing feedback

» Feedback is a ‘black box’
» Programme teams don’t discuss feedback
» Useful analytical tools available
What kind of feedback do you give?

**P₁ - Praise.** Motivating but if used indiscriminately can appear insincere.

**P₂ - Recognising Progress (ipsative feedback).** Can be motivating and informs students about their learning. Lack of progress serves as an early warning.

**C - Critique.** How work falls short of expectations or criteria; can be discouraging if not accompanied by information on how to improve.

**A - Advice.** Help students take future action to improve.

**Q - Clarification requests.** Asking learners to think more deeply about their work and generate actions themselves.

**O - Unclassified statements.** Neutral comments, for example that describe the piece of work but do not make any judgement.
Employability

Assessment practice
Promoting employability

» Emphasis on summative assessment does not reflect working life

» Skills in giving feedback and using feedback from multiple sources essential

» Sometimes understanding the brief is the hard part....

» Students can not always articulate the skills they have
Dimensions of a Work Integrated Assessment

PSY1301 - Professional Issues and Development
Paul Farrand
2012

**Peer Feedback / Review**

Include peer review and/or assessment as part of the overall process

Typically in higher education assessment feedback is solely produced by the teaching staff. In employment, however, much of the review process comes in the form of informal peer feedback, and from the clients that work has been done for.

Including this type of peer review and/or peer assessment formally within an assessment helps students to develop their critical thinking skills.

**Multiple Assessment Points**

Move to a more distributed pattern of assessment; consider introducing ‘surprise’ points

Assessments are often delivered in the form of one summative assessment, e.g. an exam, at the end of learning. In employment however, ‘assessment’ points tend to occur frequently, in addition, timing is often out of individual control, and consequently it can be necessary to juggle competing tasks at short notice.

Using multiple assessment points helps to develop reflective thinking, whilst ‘surprise’ points support task prioritisation.

**Light Structure**

Lightly structure the overall assessment; reward student approaches

Current thinking on assessment advises that assessments should be well structured, with explicit guidance to students concerning how and where marks are attained. However in employment part of the challenge for the individual and/or team is to identify the relevant priorities of tasks that are necessary to achieve an overall goal, and to derive the processes necessary to complete them.

Using a light structure approach encourages students to derive these shorter term tasks and goals in order to solve a bigger problem.

**Collaborative Working**

Create teams of students from the outset

Many forms of assessment require working alone, yet employment tasks invariably require some form of collaboration, and often with unknown individuals. Encouraging students to work with in teams with peers helps build their collaborative skills, and develops their understanding of team roles and role flexibility.

**Collaborate Project (Education Enhancement)**

Bringing together staff, students and employers to create employability focused assessments enhanced by technology

**Varied Audiences**

Aim to set audiences explicitly for each assessment point

In higher education the audience for an assessment is implicitly the academic that sets it. This contrasts with employment, where the audience can be peers, but is more often the client.

Having to focus on different audiences for an assessment provokes greater reflective thinking over content, and requires new types of synthesis.

**‘Real World’ Problem / Data**

Set an overall real world problem, supported by real world data

Purely academic learning might require a theoretical problem in order to test a theoretical understanding. In employment though problems tend to be very real. Additionally the data that you need to work with in employment rarely come in coherent, standard forms. It is usually in ‘messier’ formats that need to be interpreted to be of use.
Peer review

» Most significant shift towards assessment for learning
» Students need to be convinced of benefits
» Open source tools e.g. Peerwise
Assessment management
Electronic Assessment Management

» Academics perceive less benefits than administrative staff or students
» Technology is coming of age
» Clear evidence of workload savings
» Pre-requisite for analytics
» Clear strategies for change
“Amongst students there is very strong evidence to suggest that not only is electronic assessment management their preference, but that those who come to appreciate its attendant benefits then begin to see electronic assessment as their entitlement.”

» Increased control and agency
» Reduced anxiety
» Improved privacy and security
» Increased efficiency and convenience
» Feedback which is clearer and easier to engage with, understand and store for later use
Process review

Assessment Lifecycle

1. Specifying
2. Setting
3. Supporting
4. Submitting
5. Marking and Production of Feedback
6. Recording grades
7. Returning marks and feedback
8. Reflecting
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From principles to practice
The Vision: a principled approach

» Need to articulate the underpinning vision

» Principles are a good way to articulate and operationalise this

› Provide a synthesis of the research

› Action oriented

› Evaluation device

Resources


Overview of principles:
http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/40343419/Assessment-and-feedback-principles
REAP principles

Good assessment and feedback should:

» Clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards)
» Facilitate the development of reflection and self-assessment in learning
» Deliver high quality feedback to students: that enables them to self-correct
» Encourage peer and student-teacher dialogue around learning
» Encourage positive motivational beliefs & self esteem through assessment
» Provide opportunities to act on feedback
» Provide information to teachers that can be used to help shape their teaching (making learning visible)

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006)
Putting principles into practice

Viewpoints approach
Putting principles into practice
e-Affect, Queen’s University, Belfast
Putting principles into practice

e-Affect, Queen’s University, Belfast
Aligning technology with principles
Students as partners

...as insiders
able to identify the right problems, point to right solutions; close to the action

...as political actors
with the influence, credibility and power to be heard by academics

Students
enhancing learning
and teaching

...as champions
with enthusiasm and expertise in using technology; with know-how about peers' needs

...as evaluators
with an insider ethnographic 'hanging about', ear to the ground perspective

http://www.hei-flyers.org/
Key points

» For effective change – there is a need to clarify your **pedagogical stance** before considering what technology is used – principles provide a way of doing this

» Compelling evidence that **technology can enhance learning** and the implementation of pedagogically driven approaches to change

» Importance of students developing ‘**assessment literacies**’ – and recognising the key importance of self-regulation skills

» Assessment design needs to reflect the skills, behaviours and competences that enhance **student employability**

» Curriculum design needs to ensure sufficient opportunities for formative assessment and a timetable that permits time for **feedback to be acted on** in time for next assignment, and **monitoring** of actions
Briefings

» Changing assessment and feedback practice with the help of technology

» Electronic assessment management

» Enhancing student employability through technology supported assessment and feedback

» Feedback and feed forward: using technology to support learner longitudinal development