

Bloxham, Susan (2014) Assessing assessment: new developments in assessment design, feedback practices and marking in higher education. In: Fry, Heather, Ketteridge, Steve and Marshall, Stephanie, (eds.) A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: enhancing academic practice, 4th edition. Taylor & Francis (Routledge), Abingdon and New York, pp. 107-122.

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**6000 words excluding Bio and entries for the glossary**

## **SHORT BIO**

Sue Bloxham is Professor of Academic Practice at the University of Cumbria. She has taught in higher education for many years, developing a particular interest in assessment. Sue has published widely in this field and was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2007. Her interests focus particularly on how we design and manage higher education assignments, examinations and feedback to support the achievement of students from under-represented groups. In recent years, her curiosity in what students need to do to succeed in university assessment has inspired research into how tutors perceive standards in their marking and external examining.

## **ASSESSING ASSESSMENT: ENHANCING VITAL PRACTICE**

### **ABSTRACT**

Assessment strongly influences students' learning. Well designed and managed, it has the power to drive learning more than any other aspect of the student experience. However, it is also the aspect of the lecturer's role which has most potential for difficulty and low student satisfaction. This chapter introduces key theories, issues and practical methods in assessment. It draws on the ideas of assessment of, for and as learning to frame debate about how assessment practice can meet the need to summatively judge students' achievements whilst also promoting high quality and sustainable learning. The chapter also outlines the importance of dialogue and engagement with feedback and the challenge of reliable marking.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The assessment that students undergo communicates to them what really matters in our courses; it strongly influences students' learning, including what they study, when they study, how much work they do and the approach they take to their learning. Consequently, if we want to improve students' learning, effort and achievement, assessment is a good place to start. This chapter provides an overview of key theories and issues in developing assessment as well as practical ideas for designing, managing and marking coursework and exams and engaging students with feedback on their assessment.

## PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

One of the challenging features of assessment is that, ideally, it fulfils four major functions:

Certification characterises how we traditionally view assessment. It involves assembling evidence of students' achievement through summative assignments, examinations and performances for purposes of selection and certification (gaining a degree or qualifying as a nurse, lawyer or engineer). This purpose constitutes Assessment of Learning

Quality Assurance is a second key purpose of assessment. An institution's academic standards are demonstrated through students' assessed work and scrutiny of it forms a key accountability process. This purpose also constitutes Assessment of Learning.

Learning is a third purpose of assessment. It emphasises the **formative** and diagnostic function, helping students learn through completing their assignments and gaining feedback. It provides information about student achievement to both teachers and learners which enables the student to self-regulate their learning and the teacher to respond to the needs of the learner. This purpose constitutes Assessment for Learning.

Lifelong learning sees student involvement in assessment as moments of learning in themselves. Its purpose is to develop students' ability to self-assess and self-regulate their learning as essential to being an

effective independent learner beyond formal education (Boud 2000). This purpose constitutes Assessment as Learning and is an important subset of Assessment for learning.

Each of these purposes is important if we wish to maximise the full potential of assessment. Sadly, much university assessment emphasises 'certification' and 'quality assurance' at the expense of using it to support learning. This chapter considers how the management of summative assessment and feedback methods can balance the different purposes of assessment; encouraging lecturers to fully integrate assessment into course design. In order to do this, it will discuss the validity of assessment and will then explore aspects of 'learning oriented assessment' which encompasses both assessment for and as learning.

## **ASSESSMENT VALIDITY**

In the higher education context, most assessment has a **summative** function; it is used to demonstrate the extent of a learner's success in meeting course requirements and contributes to the final mark given for the module or programme. Its role in 'certifying' student achievement means that the **validity** of summative assessments is extremely important. There are many descriptions and uses of the concept of validity but in this context, we are focusing on 'intrinsic validity'; that is assessment tasks are assessing the stated learning outcomes for the module. For example, it is questionable whether a diet of unseen examinations can validly assess the range of knowledge and

capabilities that students are now expected to acquire. Many programmes have diversified assessment tasks to capture learning beyond knowledge and understanding but, as Knight and York (2003) argue, it is enormously difficult to reliably and validly warrant some areas of achievement, let alone attempt to grade them.

This principle of valid assessment design is clearly underpinned by the notion of **constructive alignment** (see chapter 7) in requiring lecturers to carefully check that assessment requirements are not only testing what they say they are testing but are also directing students towards appropriate learning.

Assessment tasks vary greatly in what types of learning outcome they are capable of assessing from simple recall of information (factual tests) through display of both professional knowledge and communication skills (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations- see chapter 28?) to demonstration of analysis and evaluation (reflective practice assignment). Well-designed assessment methods can also have the additional benefit of authenticity. For example, coursework can involve designing learning materials for others, analysis of an industrial case study, evaluation of work-based learning, completion of small-scale research, or designing a web page. Such authentic tasks help to motivate students and contribute to their developing **employability** through encouraging **soft skills**. An enquiry-based team project may be much more successful at assessing this type of learning than an exam or essay. At heart, a fundamental condition of effective assessment is its validity in assessing the desired

learning. For examples of many different assessment methods, beyond the scope of this chapter, see Bloxham and Boyd (2007) or Sambell et al. (2012)

### **LEARNING-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT (for and as learning)**

Whilst summative assessment has the potential to promote learning, its high stakes nature exerts pressure on students to behave strategically and focus on marks which may have a negative effect on their learning. For example, it may be easiest to memorise something quickly for a test although the knowledge will soon be forgotten because there is little incentive to really try and understand the material. It is this backwash effect of poorly designed summative assessment which has prompted a new emphasis on assessment for and as learning. Carless et al. (2006) characterise learning-oriented assessment as designing tasks that lead to learning; when students are involved in evaluating their own work and when feedback is forward-looking so that students can act upon it.

A review of significant studies of assessment indicates the following characteristics which promote learning-oriented assessment and employability:

- Assessment should have a formative function, providing 'feedforward' for future learning which can be acted upon.

- Tasks should be challenging, demanding higher order learning and integration of learning from both the university and other contexts such as work-based settings;
- Learning and assessment should be integrated, assessment should not come at the end of learning but should be part of the learning process;
- Students are involved in self-assessment and reflection on their learning; they are involved in judging performance;
- Assessment should encourage **metacognition**, promoting thinking about the learning process not just the learning outcomes;
- Assessment expectations should be made visible to students as far as possible;
- Tasks should involve the active engagement of students developing the capacity to find things out for themselves and learn independently;
- Tasks should be authentic, worthwhile, relevant and offering students some level of control over their work;
- Tasks are fit for purpose and align with important learning outcomes
- Assessment results should be used to evaluate teaching as well as student learning.

Similarly, Sambell, McDowell and Montgomery (2013) have a model which argues that assessment for learning:

- Is rich in formal feedback (e.g. tutor comment);
- Uses high stakes summative assessment rigorously but sparingly;



- Develops students' abilities to evaluate their own progress and direct their own learning;
- Offers extensive 'low stakes' confidence building opportunities and practice;
- Emphasises authentic and complex assessment tasks;
- Is rich in informal feedback (e.g. peer review of draft writing, collaborative project writing).

There is sufficient commonality in these catalogues of characteristics to provide the lecturer with key principles which can be used to review existing assessment methods. The next step is to find practical, sustainable, and acceptable (to students, staff and regulations!) ideas for turning such principles into action. Sambell et al. (2013) offer much detailed assistance both generically and across a range of disciplines. In the room available here, the focus will be on the crucial themes of formative assessment including feedback, and involving students in assessment.

## **FEEDBACK**

Feedback is arguably the most important aspect of the assessment process in raising achievement (Black et al, 2003; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004-5) because of its formative potential (see also chapters 10 and 15). It helps students understand what they need to do to improve and provides them with the confidence that they can control their achievement. It is also important to remember the importance of peer and self-assessment in creating feedback

opportunities for students. Every time a student has to examine another student's piece of work, they gain feedback through comparison with their own performance.

Research indicates that students value feedback (Weaver, 2006) although they often fail to engage with it (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004-5) and it is not always perceived as useful. University initiatives and quality assurance in the UK following successive years of poor satisfaction ratings for feedback have undoubtedly reduced problems such as minimal, incomprehensible or illegible coursework feedback but dissatisfaction continues (see chapter 2). This on-going dissatisfaction often appears to be accompanied by a lack of engagement by students who seem disinterested in collecting marked assignments or reading and acting on the feedback. Studies suggest that lack of engagement and dissatisfaction with feedback are the result of how and when it is 'delivered':

- it is one-way communication whereas students seek a dialogue about their work in order to really understand how to improve;
- the language can be difficult to understand;
- it does not come at a time when students can easily use it;
- It looks back at the work they have done rather than forward to how they can improve;
- Students recognise that tutors may value different features of course work and therefore one tutor's feedback is not always seen as useful guidance for future assignments;

How can we tackle these shortcomings?

### **Making written feedback more useful and timely**

Recent studies have emphasised the notion of **feedforward** (Hounsell 2007) which focuses on what a student should pay attention to in future assessment tasks. For example, it may be more useful to students if feedback states three clear ways in which they can improve rather than providing copious detail on the assignment. Non-specific praise is not useful, whereas comment on something a student has done well and why it is good helps students build on that successful strategy in future assessments and may be more helpful than negative feedback (Hattie and Timperley 2007). Word-processing of feedback makes it easy to read; comments can be returned to students more speedily on-line and it also allows the use of comment banks which can create the core of effective feedback quickly, allowing more time for individualised comment.

The focus of feedback is an important consideration. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to explain complex academic ideas in short feedback comments. You may have a good understanding of 'critical analysis' but it is remarkably difficult to explain simply in written feedback. This is why the opportunity for dialogue about feedback is so important to enable students to really understand what they are doing well and how they can improve. Sadly, it is often easier to give feedback on simple technical errors such as referencing and grammar but this

can lead students to think such features are more important in gaining grades than they really are.

A useful way to provide prompt feedback is to note the general strengths and weaknesses that emerge in marking a set of work. This group feedback is then emailed to the students providing very prompt feedback before moderated marks are available. It can also be used as guidance for future cohorts.

### **Integrating feedback into teaching and learning: formative assessment**

A key characteristic of learning-oriented assessment is the integration of assessment into the learning process, and formative assessment opportunities are at the heart of this. Tutors are often anxious that students will not engage with formative assessment and it will increase staff workload. However, students leave school or college used to the habit of completing regular low stakes homework tasks as part of the preparation process for summative assessment. We can learn from this to ascertain the necessary conditions to motivate students to continue completing formative tasks once they enter higher education. Formative assessment should, therefore:

- explicitly help students complete summative assessment tasks;
- require the students to submit it in some way (bring to class, post on line, hand it in) and action is taken if they fail to do this;
- lead to students receiving useful feedback;

- not be contaminated by summative purposes. If tasks contribute to summative grades, then students will be reluctant to admit that they don't understand something or need more help. A fundamental purpose of formative assessment is allow students to admit difficulties and gain help without the threat of lost marks.

There are a range of ways in which formative tasks can meet these conditions. For example: on-line tests giving immediate feedback on topics that feature in the final examination; writing summative assignments and receiving peer feedback on the draft; completing 'sub' tasks for the summative assessment for in class discussion and feedback (as in case-study two); and in-lecture quizzes. Peer, self-, automated marking and in-class feedback are all ways in which this formative assessment can lead to useful and fast feedback without increasing the marking load for staff. Case study two is an example of a tutor significantly reducing her marking load whilst increasing student engagement through formative assessment. It is worth noting that peer assessment in this formative context avoids concern about unfair marking, a common complaint even though it is not supported by the evidence (Falchikov, 2005).

It is important to encourage students to recognise and use all sources of feedback including one-to-one tutorials; seeing or hearing about other students' work and comparing their own with it; feedback from work-based mentors and in-class, informal feedback. Students are most likely to take note of feedback if they receive it at a point when it appears really useful. Lecturers can provide

this, for example, by sharing feedback on the common mistakes or weaknesses evident in the last cohort. In addition, students can receive formative feedback through 'rehearsal' assessments such as practice presentations and mock exams and through the provision of model answers which students can self-assess against as in case study 1. Alternative approaches involve giving students feedback at the draft stage when they are much more likely to read and act on it (as we typically do for PhD students!); encouraging drafting and redrafting work just as we do in writing for publication (O'Donovan et al 2008). Tutors then only need to provide a short global comment and grade on the final item. Keep copies of your comments on the drafts to demonstrate to students, examiners and assessors that you have given feedback appropriately.

## **ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING AND SELF-REGULATION**

Recent developments in the field of feedback are focusing on the importance of the student as self-assessor; someone who is able to provide their own feedback because they understand the standard they are aiming for and can judge and change their own performance in relation to that standard; that is self-regulation (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Systematic reviews of research (Black & Wiliam, 1998, Falchikov 2005) indicate strong positive benefits to students of being involved in their own assessment. The theoretical basis for this is Sadler's (1989) seminal exposition of three essential conditions for improvement (paraphrasing):

1. students must know what the standard or goal is that they are trying to achieve;
2. they should know how their current achievement compares to those goals;
3. they should have strategies to reduce the gap between the first two.

Unfortunately, such conditions are not easily met. In relation to the first condition, it is very difficult to make the tacit knowledge, things we know but find it difficult to express, involved in judging the quality of academic work explicit (O'Donovan et al. 2008). However, involving students in assessment provides an authentic opportunity for them to learn what 'quality' is in their subject and apply that judgement to their work (Black et al., 2003). Peer assessment is particularly useful in this context as long as they are helped to understand its purpose and value. Research shows that it can help students understand the standards of their discipline more effectively than anything else (Black et al. 2003) as they review others' attempts at the same task. It is important that students recognise that the main benefit is gained through being a peer assessor rather than being peer assessed.

Group assignments also enable students to see how others tackle academic tasks and this can be another important source of feedback on expected standards, their own performance and what action they might take to achieve those standards. This is particularly the case if they are helped to recognise the learning opportunity created by working with others.

Studies have also emphasised the need for more dialogue between students and staff regarding feedback to allow the tacit assumptions of teachers to be made more visible (Sadler's first condition). Students value dialogue, seeing it as crucial to their understanding of both assessment tasks and feedback and to identify the particular expectations of individual teachers (Bloxham & West, 2007). Student to student dialogue alone may be insufficient (Northedge 2003) principally because it is not dialogue in the company of someone with 'expertise'; a key component of learning tacit knowledge. Therefore, dialogue should involve engagement with those who already have a grasp of the standards (teachers, peer advisers, post graduates) and comprise opportunities to ask questions to make guidance, feedback and judgements clearer. Some possible ways to improve guidance include outlining expectations for an assignment in class or on line where students have the opportunity to ask questions. Alternatively, copy Rust et al's (2003) intervention which involved students discussing exemplar assignments coupled with input from the teacher to explain the criteria used. In general, there is a growing emphasis on dialogue regarding exemplars as a useful form of guidance (Handley et al, 2011). In these approaches, the dialogue about real work is informed by an expert view.

In relation to feedback dialogue, it can be inbuilt in seminar sessions. A useful method suitable for small and medium sized seminar groups is as follows: work is returned to students and they are asked to read the feedback and bring it to the next seminar. During the seminar, students work in groups on a prepared



task whilst the teacher meets each student for 3-5 minutes to check their understanding of feedback on the returned work and clarify or emphasise the main elements they need to pay attention to in further work. This method also ensures that feedback is read! Alternatively, students can be asked to peer review each other's draft work in the context of the teacher's explanation of the requirements. The students are encouraged to give each other feedback and to ask questions that are generated by looking at the drafts. A further method is to pass copies of feedback to personal tutors and ask them to use personal tutorials to encourage students to identify the changes they need to make to improve.

## **CASE STUDIES**

Two case studies provide concrete examples of learning-oriented assessment embedded in modules. In both cases they use formative assessment techniques but have successfully engaged the students. In relation to Sadler's conditions, Mark's example creates an excellent opportunity for the students to develop an understanding of the required standards and their own performance in relation to it. Georgia's module describes a useful method of thoroughly integrating the assessment with the teaching to increase student learning and engagement.

### **Case Study – Environmental Biology**

***'Tell me how you did'* – model answers with an honours class**

This case study describes combining model answers with self-critique followed by teacher-student dialogue. It reduces marking time, encourages engagement by students with feedback and ensures that the formative elements of your assessment are not lost in the glare of a summative mark.

About 30 honours students write a 2000 word critique of a published scientific paper. We discuss an example paper and critique in class, to show the kinds of topics I am looking for (for example, relevant research design, appropriate sample size, correct use of statistics and logical arguments). Students then choose one of two papers and produce their critique, which should include positive as well as negative comments. As soon as the work is submitted, I release a model answer for each paper and then mark the assignments. I explain to the students at the start of the module that in order to receive a summative mark back, they need to email me a short appraisal of their own work, drawing on the model answer provided. This cannot influence the grade (the marking is done) but does require them to engage with the model answer and to reflect on their own attempt. I respond to their email emphasising the points they correctly identify and adding any they miss. An additional feature is that the final assessment for this module includes an elective examination question that does the same thing – critiques a published paper – hence students know that this coursework feeds forward into another assessment.

Only 2% of more than 150 students have failed to send a self-assessment email over the past five years, perhaps because I am careful to explain to students

why I use this approach: I want them to really engage with the model answer and conduct a careful critique of their work, without being distracted by the summative mark. I have never had a complaint about 'hiding' marks, and student self-critiques are often thorough and thoughtful, making lengthy feedback from me unnecessary.

## **Case Study 2- Education**

### **Improving the learning, reducing the marking**

A Level 4 undergraduate module in teacher education, assessed through a 4000 word 'portfolio', was redesigned to increase the involvement of students and spread their workload whilst reducing the marking. Students completed a Professional Development Activity (PDA) after each taught session in preparation for the following week. The PDAs were an extension or application of learning from the session. The following week, the PDAs were used in various ways such as peer reviewing, sharing findings or applying research. For example, one week, in groups of four, students peer reviewed a mini essay, commenting in turn on content; academic conventions and writing, and the use of description /analysis. At the end, they wrote how they would improve their writing in the final assignment. They found this formative assessment very useful both as a giver and recipient of feedback.

Because the PDAs involved a lot of work, the final summative assignment was reduced to 1500 words. Students had to submit the eight PDAs as appendices

with the expectation that they would cross reference to them in their assignment.

In module evaluations the students overwhelmingly commented very favourably about the module and its approach to assessment. They liked the spread of workload and the formative assessment feedback they received. Engagement with the PDAs increased because these were always used in the following session, thus creating a sense of real purpose. If they weren't completed, students might let someone else down, or squander an opportunity for personal feedback.

The PDA follow up activities brought them closer together as a group because they involved sharing personal perspectives, or because they had to work collaboratively to create a joint product. I felt they were more engaged in their learning because they had made a greater prior investment into the sessions.

My marking load was reduced. I did scan through the PDAs but did not use them to grade the assignment. I commented explicitly when I saw that they had clearly improved their final piece of work in response to previous formative feedback, which many of them had.

In future, the follow-up activities could be developed further to include greater higher order thinking. Overall it was an approach which benefitted both me and the students greatly, and which I will continue to use in future modules.

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## **MARKING AND ACADEMIC JUDGEMENT**

Marking is often considered one of the most tedious elements of a teaching role. However, following the above discussion, we can see that marking and the associated feedback generated can make an important contribution to student learning and satisfaction. In the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency expects institutions to have transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and moderation and you will find that your institution has quality assurance processes to check these and to protect its academic standards (see chapter 2). Nevertheless, university-level marking is notably less systematic than typical public and professional examinations such as 'A' levels and there is nothing like the infrastructure to support and scrutinise **reliability** between markers and subjects. With the exception of the Open University, the scale is small in comparison and rigorous processes for testing marking reliability are largely absent as tutors generally set and mark their own papers checked by the limited safeguards of second marking, moderation and external examining. Consequently, in a period of high student fees and potential appeals and

complaints about grades, it is not surprising if new lecturers feel anxious about marking and a lack of confidence in their judgements.

Delivering fairness, consistency and reliability in marking is a significant challenge (Yorke, 2011). Reliability means that assessment tasks should be generating comparable marks across time, across markers and across methods. Whilst assessment criteria have been developed to improve marking reliability, there is growing evidence that academic judgement cannot easily be represented by a short set of explicit criteria however carefully formulated. The 'hidden' and inexpressible nature of the tacit knowledge used in tutors' judgement is compounded by the complex nature of work being assessed at higher education level which in many instances allows for a wide range of satisfactory student responses. For example, students may respond to an essay question or design brief in very different, but equally effective, ways. In addition, the language of criteria always needs an element of interpretation. This means that most marking is a matter of 'judgement', not 'measurement' (Yorke 2011).

Nevertheless, providing guidance on the essential requirements of an assignment assists new markers in making assessment decisions if they are supported by discussion; see below. In addition, they may help students focus their efforts in the right direction but only if they are helped to understand the criteria. Given the need for interpretation, it is wise to encourage students to see assessment criteria as broad guidelines rather than the basis for systematic

measurement of achievement. In particular, specifying too much detail in criteria encourages dependent rather than independent learning with students focusing on meeting individual criteria rather than gaining a holistic overview of the purpose for the assignment.

Lecturers generally learn assessment standards through an informal process of marking alongside departmental colleagues (Shay, 2005). It is difficult to learn tacit knowledge in any other way. However, the differentiated and socially situated nature of this learning creates the potential for individual differences in marking judgement as standards are influenced by a host of factors including lecturer's values, specialist knowledge, socialisation processes, relationships with students and their previous experience (Bloxham 2012). Shay (2005, p. 664) suggests that 'differences between markers are not 'error', but rather the inescapable outcome of the multiplicity of perspectives that assessors bring with them'. As a result, it is argued that lecturers construct their own Standards' Frameworks (Bloxham, Boyd & Orr 2011). Such highly complex frameworks represent how various influences combine to create a unique lens through which each tutor reads and judges student performance. Standards' frameworks are dynamic; constructed and reconstructed through involvement in communities and practices including engagement with student work, moderation and examiners' feedback (Crisp, 2008). However, as a result, lecturers can focus on different aspects of student work, for example their first impressions or presentational features (Hartley et al., 2006;) leading to different judgement about the quality of a student's work. It is also important to be aware

that 'assessors' grading behaviour is tacitly influenced by **norm referencing** as tutors draw on their knowledge of other students' work in order to make their judgement.

Consequently, tutors should not be unduly worried or surprised if their marks do not align closely with their colleagues. What is important are the processes undertaken to align marks with broader standards and ensure that students get as fair and as accurate a mark as is possible. Likewise, marking research (Sadler 2009) indicates that we should not be surprised if we find ourselves making holistic judgements about the quality of student work rather than judging assignments criterion by criterion. This holistic approach is common to professional decision-making in general. Post-hoc checking of a holistic judgement against a marking scheme is a method used by lecturers to check or confirm judgement (Bloxham, Boyd and Orr, 2011) and to frame feedback against the stated criteria.

The following paragraphs outline some methods that can be used to develop and safeguard marking standards in this difficult context.

### **Pre-moderation and discussion**

Consistency can be improved for new (and experienced) markers if they have an opportunity to discuss the criteria and establish common meanings, making use of marking schemes and real examples of student work. This is the best



way to calibrate your personal standards against those of your colleagues and improve consistency. A useful way to do this is pre-moderation when all assessors pre-mark the same small sample of scripts and discuss the marks before marking the main batch.

### **Maintaining your own consistency and standards in marking**

It is important for each of us to be aware of the influences on our marking. For example marks can be affected by varying the amount of time spent marking individual items. In addition, when good work is marked after poor, it is easy to inflate the marks, and levels of tiredness can impact on decision-making. Tutors should also be alert to their own standards framework and academic prejudices which may unfairly sway marking too far up or down, giving weighting to factors they particularly care about. Some lecturers will 'punish' poor grammar or inconsistent referencing particularly harshly and beyond the agreed criteria. Hartley et al. (2006) found that tutors gave significantly higher marks on average to essays typed in 12 point font rather than 10 point font!

### **Deciding what mark to award**

A student's work will not typically fit one grade descriptor (e.g. 2.i.). One approach to take is a 'best fit' approach for individual criterion. This involves identifying which of the statements in the grade descriptor or marking scheme is nearest to the student's performance for any criterion. Once the best fit has been identified for each individual criterion, it will be easier to identify the overall

band for the work by examining where the majority of criteria lie or by compensating strong performance in one area with weak performance elsewhere. It then remains to decide whether the work should be placed in the upper or lower level within that overall grade band.

## **CONCLUSION**

Assessment is a very significant area of endeavour and this chapter has only been able to touch on a number of key aspects. Readers are encouraged to make use of the suggestions for further reading in order to pursue the topics introduced here and to find other practical ideas and solutions. There are a number of key areas that are beyond the scope of this chapter including the design of programme level assessment strategies, technology-enhanced assessment, equality and diversity in assessment practices, preparing students for assessment, plagiarism and many more. On the other hand, the chapter has provided a starting point for thinking about assessment, arguing that a good balance between the different purposes of assessment creates a strong foundation for upholding academic standards within a learning-oriented environment.

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- Yorke, M., (2011) 'Summative assessment: dealing with the 'measurement fallacy', *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(3), pp. 251–73.

## **FURTHER READING**

There is a growing number of useful publications on assessment in higher education and the selection below is offered as a gateway to valuable material. Readers are also encouraged to follow up discipline specific assessment literature.

Bloxham, S. and Boyd, P. (2007)

Boud, D & Falchikov, N (2007) Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education.

London: Routledge

Merry, S., Price, M., Carless, D and Taras, M (2013) Reconceptualising

Feedback in Higher Education. London: Routledge,

Price, M., Rust, C., O'Donovan, B., Handley, K. with Bryant, R (2012)

Assessment Literacy, The Foundation for Improving Student Learning

Oxford: OCSLD

Quality Assurance Agency (2012) Understanding assessment: its role in

safeguarding academic standards and quality in higher education,

Second edition. Gloucester: QAA, available on-line at [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Sambell, K, McDowell, L. and Montgomery, C (2013)

## **Words for the book's glossary**

**Constructive Alignment** is a course design methodology which emphasises the centrality of intended learning outcomes. These should determine the teaching and assessment such that they are compatible and act to support one another.

**Employability** has been defined as 'A set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation' (Knight and Yorke, 2003,:5)\*. Willingness to continue learning, ability to find things out, flexibility and adaptability, risk taking and self skills such as metacognition and self management are elements of employability alongside subject knowledge and intellectual and generic skills.

**Feedback** refers to information about student work and progress provided to students in response to aspects of their performance.

**Feedforward** refers to information about student work and progress which focuses on future action rather than past mistakes. The purpose of feedforward is to ensure that feedback clearly informs students' further learning.

**Formative assessment** refers to assessment which is intended to provide feedback to the student such that they can improve their work and take control of their own learning and to the teacher so that they may adjust their teaching.

**Metacognition** refers to the processes that allow people to reflect on their own cognitive abilities, that is to know what they know, or to think about their thinking. It includes knowledge about when and how to use particular strategies for learning.

**Moderation** is a process for assuring that grades awarded are fair and reliable and that marking criteria have been applied appropriately and consistently.

**Norm-referenced** marking measures student performance in relation to his / her cohort or a wider group of students. The grade awarded depends not

only on the quality of a student's work but also on the quality of others' performance.

**Peer assessment** involves students in assessing other students for formative or summative purposes. The benefits include a greater sense of accountability, motivation and responsibility, increased speed of feedback and understanding of the subject matter, standards required and students' own achievement.

**Quality Assurance Agency** is a UK organization which reviews the performance of universities and higher education wherever it takes place. Its role is to safeguard standards so that students have the best possible learning experiences.

**Reliability** in assessment means that assessment tasks should be generating comparable marks across time, across markers and across methods.

**Soft skills** refer to a broad range of generic skills required for learning and employment, for example, managing one's workload, communicating well, learning independently, solving problems and working effectively with others.

**Summative** assessment is focused on judgement on performance. Summative assessment typically counts towards, or constitutes, a final grade or classification for a module or course.

**Validity** In this text we are using validity in the context of student assessment to mean that a valid assessment task or examination assesses the stated outcomes.

\* Knight, P.T. and Yorke, M. (2003) *Assessment, Learning and Employability*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.