Principles of Assessment and Feedback

Centre for Learning and Teaching
Aims of this presentation

• To highlight some of the key concepts in assessment and feedback
• To present some of the key research in this area
Why do we assess students?

• Spend a few moments thinking about this.
Assessment is:

‘about reporting on students’ achievements and about teaching them better through expressing to them more clearly the goals of our curricula. **It is about measuring student learning; it is about diagnosing misunderstandings in order to help students to learn more effectively.** It concerns the quality of teaching as well as the quality of learning; it involves us in learning from our students’ experiences, and **is about changing ourselves as well as our students**.’

(Ramsden, 2003: 177)
From our students’ point of view, assessment always defines the actual curriculum

(Ramsden, 2003: 182)
(Some) issues with assessment and feedback

Students:
• Assessments bunched together
• Assessment ‘burden’
• Confusion about standards & criteria
• Timeliness
• Emotions (anxiety; anger)
• How to understand criteria
• How to understand feedback (language, terminology)
• Lack of relevance
• Don’t know how to use it/apply it to a future task

Staff:
• Assessment ‘burden’ – assessment not reflected in workload
• Students obsessed with marks, not feedback
• Students don’t read feedback
• Time
• Emotions (anger/frustration/pleasure?)
• How much?
• Language & tone
Recent developments
The REAP project

Assessment activities support student learning if they:
1. Capture sufficient study time and effort (in and out of class)
2. Are spread evenly across topics and weeks
3. Lead to productive learning activity (deep rather than surface learning)
4. Communicate clear and high expectations.

(Gibbs and Simpson 2004)
The REAP project – 7 Principles of good feedback

1. helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
3. delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

Nicol, D. J. & Macfarlane-Dick, D. 2006
Bigg’s constructive alignment

Constructive alignment

LOs

Assessment tasks

Learning activities

Developed by John Biggs, 1999

Design assessment criteria
VALID: Are we measuring what we are trying to measure?

RELIABLE: Is it fair? Would multiple markers give the same mark?

TRANSPARENT: Do students know ‘where the goalposts are’?

AUTHENTIC Does it reflect ‘real-world’ scenarios?
Assessment: partnership

Engages students in productive/challenging (learning) activities – motivates learning

Appropriate time & effort to imp aspects

Students inducted into ass practices/culture

Ass for learning at heart of course design

Ass inclusive & trustworthy

E-submission

Anon marking

Ass for learning focus for staff dev

Informs teaching practice

Students involved in decision-making

Choice/variety – content & process for ass & feedback

Clarifies what good performance is
Feedback: dialogue

- Feedback addresses performance (not characteristics)
- High-quality feedback
  - Helps students self-assessed and self-correct
  - Encourages +ive motivational beliefs & self-esteem
  - Feedback is appropriate
  - Feedforward
- Feedback timely
- Feedback on all assessment tasks
  - Enough detail
  - Often enough
  - F2F feedback for at least first piece of assessment each year
  - Students using feedback
  - Self-assessment, peer assessment, reflection
- Feedback improves student learning
  - Feedback improves student learning

Feedback improves student learning
Assessment and feedback planning

• What is the assessment and feedback ‘diet’ across the whole course?
• For a particular assignment
  – What type of assessment? What type of feedback?
  – When in the course, and what will the timings be for returning feedback?
  – How can clear goals and standards be shared and understood?
  – How will the feedback be organised?
  – How will students use the feedback?
• How can this involve marking teams, new staff, students?
Your experiences: What ways can students be encouraged to engage with their feedback?
Getting students to engage with feedback

- Involve students in planning feedback
- Fire their enthusiasm
  - Give students practice in writing feedback using marking criteria e.g. peer marking
  - Feedback timely
    - Make feedback accessible
      - Make sure students understand it
      - Do students know where to find it?
  - Feedback improves student learning
  - Feedforward
    - Find times when they are engaged
      - Include a reflection on feedback in next assignment
      - Give fast generic feedback and ask students to gauge their performance
        - Set aside time in face to face sessions to work through
      - Give feedback without revealing marks

Feedback improves student learning

Feedback improves student learning
Inclusive?

FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE
Diversity of assessment types

• A variety of methods is desirable:
  – to measure different types of learning
  – to enable students to work to their strengths at some times but also face new challenges
  – to facilitate ‘reasonable adjustments’ for students with disabilities while retaining rigour and consistency of marking
  – to enable student choice
• But not so many different formats that students don’t get enough experience to develop expertise in each approach.


Phil Race: https://phil-race.co.uk/assessment/
