



Towards integrated, connected and complex learning from assessment using TESTA



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AHE Conference Masterclass
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Connecting to your experience

- Think of a time when you felt you really had a powerful learning experience.
- Why was it powerful?
- Turn to the person next to you and tell them about it.

If TESTA is the answer, what is the
problem?



How does IKEA 101 work for complex and connected learning?



Today's Masterclass

1. Weaving main theory and methods of TESTA through the talk
2. Looking at data from the TESTA audit, AEQ, and focus groups
3. Exploring data and findings inductively and thematically.
4. The Change Process – role play

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Welcome to TESTA

Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment (TESTA) is a £200,000 National Teaching Fellowship project on programme assessment, funded by the Higher Education Academy, led by the University of Winchester (2009-2012).

TESTA originally conducted research on eight programmes in four partner universities to map assessment environments, develop interventions and evaluate them. The TESTA approach has been used with more than 100 programmes in over 40 UK universities, and in Australia, India and the USA. TESTA works with academics, students and managers – and for students, academics and managers – to identify study behaviour, generate assessment patterns to foster deeper learning across whole programmes, and debunk regulatory myths which prevent assessment for learning.



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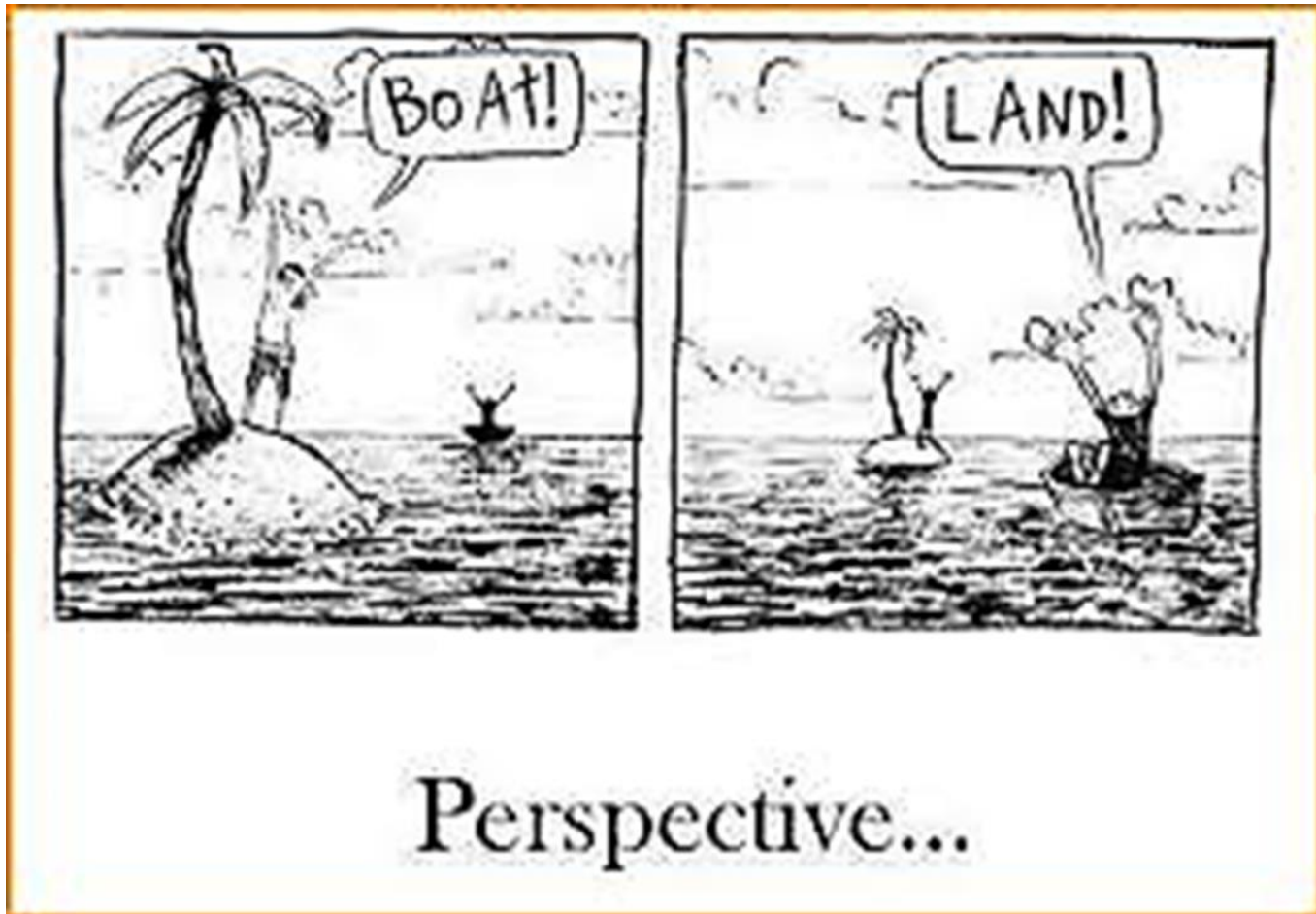


National
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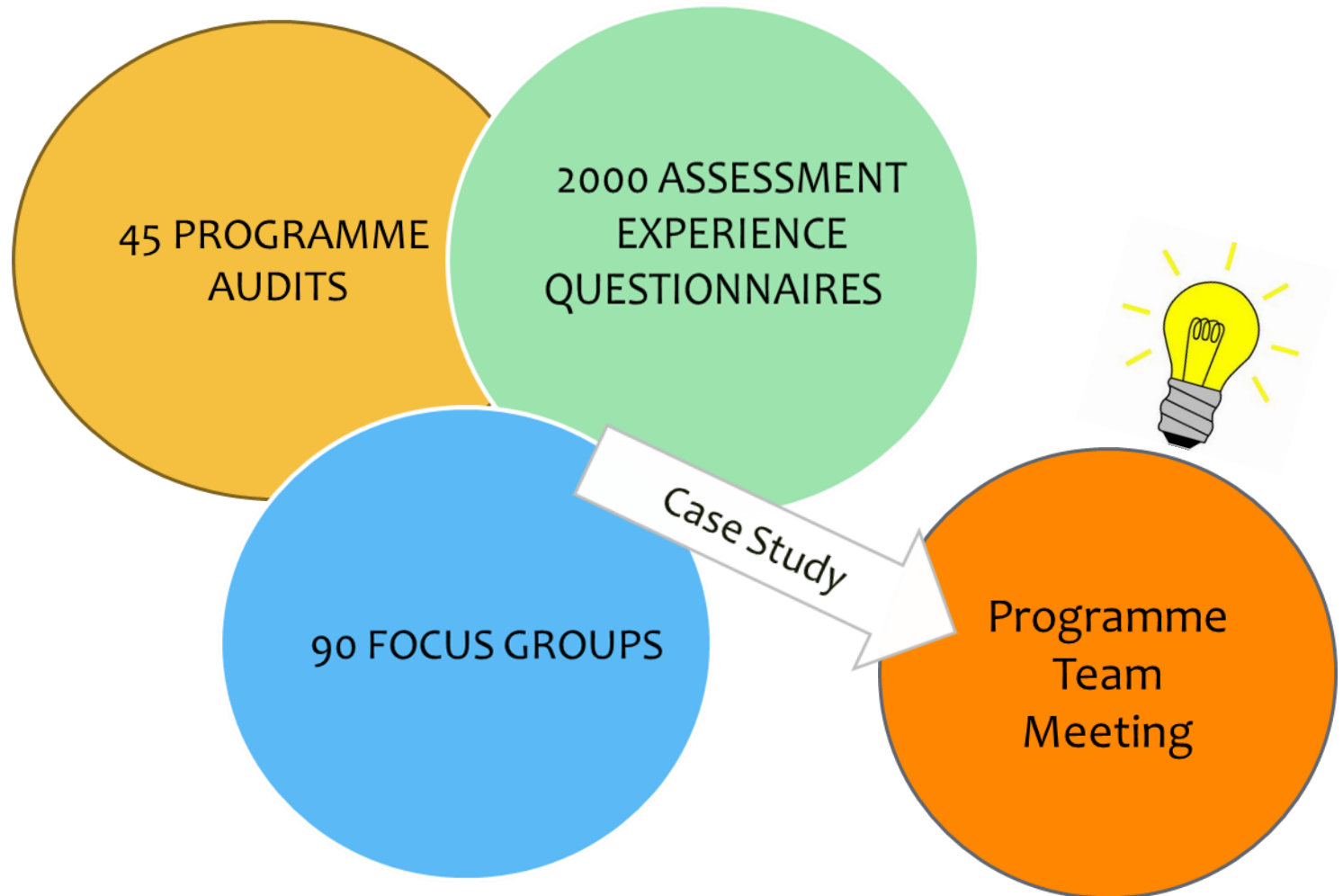


A word cloud of UK universities and locations. The largest words are 'Durham', 'Birmingham', 'Winchester', 'Bath', 'Spa', 'Worcester', 'New South Wales', 'UCL', 'Essex', 'London Metropolitan', 'Kent', 'Delhi', 'Greenwich', 'Robert Gordon', 'Roehampton', 'Queen Mary', 'University of Newcastle', 'Loughborough', 'Sheffield Hallam', 'University of West Scotland', 'Glasgow', 'Southampton', 'Solent', 'Nottingham', 'Edge Hill', 'Saurashtra Metropolitan', 'Liverpool', 'John Moore', 'Edinburgh Napier', 'Chichester', 'Keele', 'Dundee', 'London', 'Winchester', 'Birmingham', 'New South Wales', 'UCL', 'Essex', 'London Metropolitan', 'Kent', 'Delhi', 'Greenwich', 'Robert Gordon', 'Roehampton', 'Queen Mary', 'University of Newcastle', 'Loughborough', 'Sheffield Hallam', 'University of West Scotland', 'Glasgow', 'Southampton', 'Solent', 'Nottingham', 'Edge Hill', 'Saurashtra Metropolitan', 'Liverpool', 'John Moore', 'Edinburgh Napier', 'Chichester', 'Keele', 'Dundee', 'London'.

TESTA changes perspectives



The TESTA Methodology



Based on assessment for learning principles

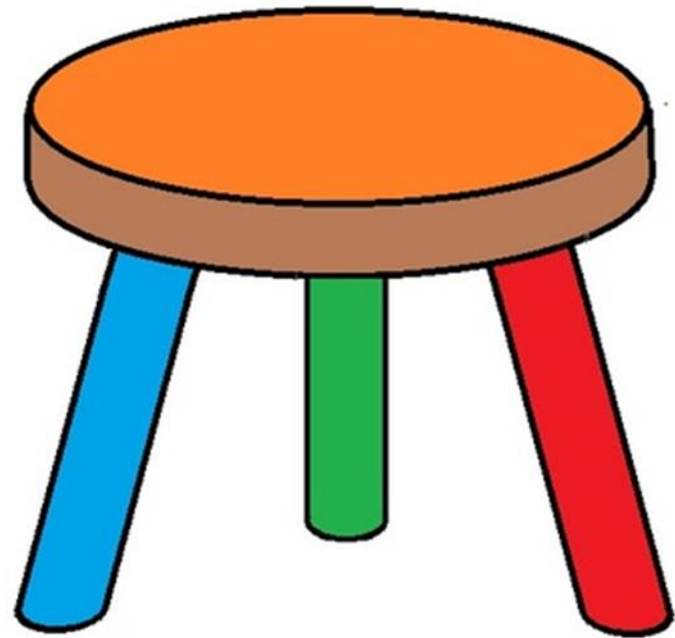
- 'Time-on-task' (Gibbs 2004)
- Challenging and high expectations (Chickering and Gamson 1987)
- Internalising goals and standards (Sadler 1989; Nicol and McFarlane-Dick 2006)
- Prompt, detailed, specific, developmental, dialogic feedback (Gibbs 2004; Nicol 2010)
- Deep learning (Marton and Saljo 1976).

Defining the terms

- **Summative assessment** carries a grade which counts toward the degree classification. It is generally considered 'high risk' by students.
- **Formative assessment** consists of comments and does not usually carry a grade ('uncorrupted' formative). In the TESTA project, formative assessment is defined as requiring to be done by all students.

The Audit

- Summative
- Formative
- Variety of tasks
- Proportion of exams
- Time to return feedback
- Oral feedback in minutes
- Written feedback – no of words



Data: the programme audit

Look at the audit data and make group notes on flipchart paper on one question:

- 1) Any interesting patterns?
- 2) Anything particularly striking?
- 3) Any questions, curiosities, scepticisms?
- 4) Any predictions about how students might learn in this assessment environment?

Focus group data

1. What quotes, phrases or words resonate for you?
2. How does it relate to audit data patterns and themes, if at all?
3. What central problems or issues does it highlight?



Focus Group triangulation

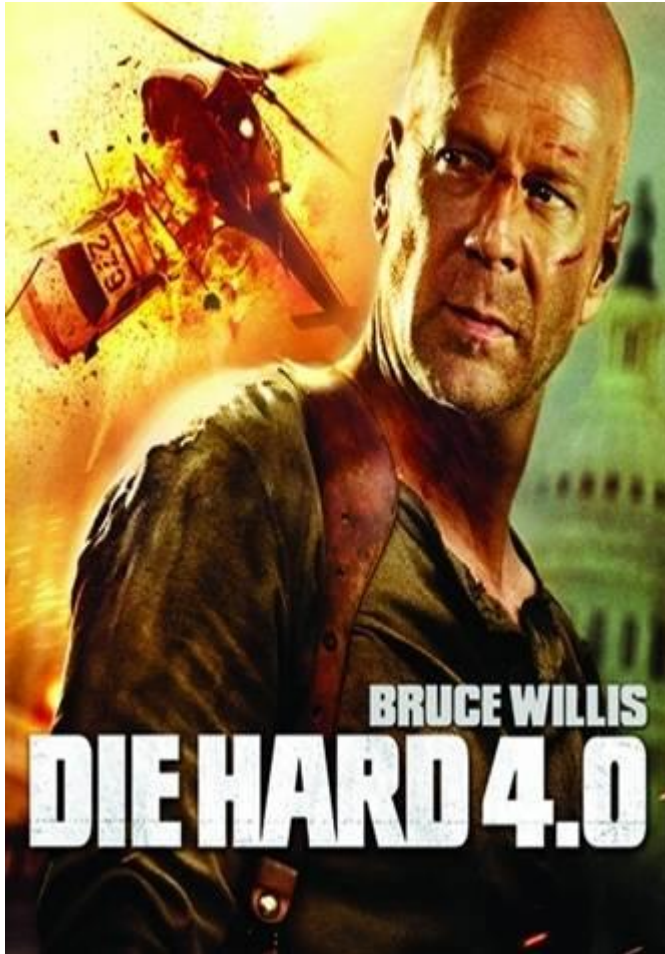
- Use post its to jot down your thoughts as you read each transcript
- Place post its around the room under various theme flipcharts
- Browse the room for common themes, cluster post its together



The AEQ: what is it and what next?

- a) Fill in an AEQ from the vantage point of being a student in the past, or one of your students
- b) Cluster the questions into scales using the Scales Exercise.
- c) What's a 'good' score?
- d) Any thoughts, issues, comments, questions, critiques?

AEQ V.4.0 infinity and beyond!



The Case Study

- Detailed contextual analysis
- Multiple sources of evidence
- Triangulation of data
- Headlines
- Ambiguous, contradictory, exploratory, real
- Respects academics and disciplinary practice

Change Process: how not to do it



More on how **not** to do it

- Only one or two members of the team
- Heavy-handed and managerial
- Too much information
- Too much negative information
- Lack of soft stuff – food, drinks, chat, humour, empathy, conducive spaces
- Focusing on modules

How to do it

- Trust and confidentiality
- Willingness to be admit gaps, listening
- Respect for disciplines
- Team ownership
- Capturing nub of the discussion in writing
- Time, food, drink, informality – the ‘soft’ stuff
- Focusing on the whole programme
- Systemic approaches – students, QA etc

Wins the day

The value was to look at what we do from a scientific perspective and look at things objectively, and that is really enabling us to re-think how we do things.

But I don't think it's just the tools. The tools are good and they work really, really well, but I can imagine someone coming in and saying 'We'll do this and wrap it up'. It's also the approach. It comes through a kind of collegiality.

It's been a collaborative thing...It's about 'This is what they've found out folks. What are we going to do about it? How are we going to develop it? How will it best suit us?'

Thematic options: TESTA findings

1. Too much summative
2. Too little formative
3. Ineffective feedback
4. Feedback as monologue
5. Students puzzled about goals and standards

Finding 1: Modular degrees create a high summative assessment diet

- Range of UK summative assessment 24 - 239 over three years
- Indian and NZ universities – 100s of small assessments – busywork, grading as ‘pedagogies of control’
- UK average about two per module, circa 40 in three years

What students say...

- *We don't get much time to think. We finish one assignment and the other one is knocking at the door.*
- *A lot of people don't do wider reading. You just focus on your essay question.*
- *I always find myself going to the library and going 'These are the books related to this essay' and that's it.*
- *We just have to kind of regurgitate it ... if we don't memorise it, there's no time for us to really fiddle around with it, there's so much to cover.*

What students say

- *If I didn't think it would come up in the exam, I wouldn't read it, even if I was interested in the topic. That's going to be time I can't really spend.*
- *The quantity of assessed work is very tiring. We'd rather genuinely study the subject.*
- *You anticipate the questions coming up, and you learn the materials that will definitely come up. It's definitely a way to focus your studies and to get a good mark, perhaps. But is it is really the way to learn?*
- *If you memorise, you get a good grade.*

Assessment Arms Race



A student's lecture to her professors



The best approach from the student's perspective is to focus on concepts. I'm sorry to break it to you, but your students are not going to remember 90 per cent – possibly 99 per cent – of what you teach them unless it's conceptual.... when broad, overarching connections are made, education occurs. Most details are only a necessary means to that end.

http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/a-students-lecture-to-professors/2013238.fullarticle#.U3orx_f9xWc.twitter

Finding 2: Formative tasks are relatively absent and compete with summative tasks

The ratio of formative to summative in UK universities is about 1:4.

Students describe rarely encountering formative tasks.

Definitions of formative

- “Definitional fuzziness” Mantz Yorke (2003)
- Basic idea is simple – to contribute to student learning through the provision of information about performance (Yorke, 2003).
- A fine tuning mechanism for how and what we learn (Boud 2000).

Focus group data: Triangulate

1. What formative assessment have you participated in or designed?
2. What are the barriers to student doing formative tasks?
3. Any ideas for fixing them?



What students say: possibilities

- *It didn't actually count so that helped quite a lot because it was just a practice and didn't really matter what we did and we could learn from mistakes so that was quite useful.*
- *It gives you the freedom potentially to try a new technique of writing an essay. I don't want to write an essay for a grade because I just want to write an essay for the process of learning.*
- *I feel like we should have done experimenting and being creative with my essays in the first year and after this it really does count.*
- *He's such a better essay writer because he's constantly writing. And we don't, especially in the first year when we really don't have anything to do. The amount of times formative assignments could have taken place...*

What students say: barriers

- *If there weren't loads of other assessments, I'd do it.*
- *If there are no actual consequences of not doing it, most students are going to sit in the bar.*
- *It's good to know you're being graded because you take it more seriously.*
- *I would probably work for tasks, but for a lot of people, if it's not going to count towards your degree, why bother?*
- *The lecturers do formative assessment but we don't get any feedback on it.*

Summary of TESTA evidence about formative

- 1) Competes for time and effort with summative assessment.
- 2) Volume of summative assessment squeezes out formative
- 3) Modules and semesters
- 4) Marks-driven culture, weak theory and rationale for formative among students and lecturers
- 5) It's not required.

Five ideas for fixing formative



In small groups, on flipchart paper, jot down five ideas to 'fix' formative.

Rebalance and connect



Assessment design for learning

Summative

- Decrease number
- Measure less frequently
- Link across modules
- Cycles of formative summative

Formative

- Formative about relationships
- Authentic and public tasks
- Connect to experience and prior/future learning
- All or nothing – expose staff and students to the value

Integrate

- Show the curriculum joins between formative and summative
- Into Quality Assurance frameworks
- Into feedback and standards dialogues

Finding 3: Modular design renders feedback less effective

“Feedback is the single most influential factor in student learning” (Hattie 2009).

What students say

- *The feedback is generally focused on the module.*
- *It's difficult because your assignments are so detached from the next one you do for that subject. They don't relate to each other.*
- *Because it's at the end of the module, it doesn't feed into our future work.*
- *I read it and think "Well, that's fine but I've already handed it in now and got the mark. It's too late".*

What students say

- *Because they have to mark so many that our essay becomes lost in the sea that they have to mark.*
- *I read through it when I get it and that's about it really. They all go in a little folder and I don't look at them again most of the time. It's mostly the mark really that you look for.*
- *I don't think any of the feedback has affected my study. The exam feedback in particular didn't make a difference at all. It hasn't changed how I've studied for the next exam.*
- *It told you some of the problems but it doesn't tell you how you can manage to fix that. It was, "Well, this is the problem." I was like, "How do I fix it?" They said, "Well, some people are just not good at writing."*

"Essential reading for anyone with aspirations."
Matthew Syed, *Bounce*

MINDSET

HOW YOU CAN FULFIL
YOUR POTENTIAL

- Business
- Parenting
- School
- Relationships

DR CAROL S. DWECK

Some people are
just not good at
writing...

Here are some ways
in which you can
improve...

Modular feedback issues

- It's disconnected
- Individual and modular improvements won't fix it.
- “Dangling the data better” Boud and Molloy 2013.
- It's a design issue.



Finding 4: Mass higher education has reduced dialogue, and pedagogic relationship to a one-way transaction



What students say

- *It was like 'Who's Holly?' It's that relationship where you're just a student.*
- *Here they say 'Oh yes, I don't know who you are. Got too many to remember, don't really care, I'll mark you on your assignment'.*
- *When I first started, I cared more and then I thought 'Are they actually taking any of this in? Are they making a note of my progress or anything?'*

What students say

- *Once we've had spoken feedback, it's gone. It's much better, and more personal, but then it's gone.*
- *We've had screencast, and audio feedback. You can see tutors interacting with your piece, which is interesting. It really helped me in terms of structure, and also with the method.*
- *I liked the screen-casting. It was really good. And sometimes it's better than going to the lecturer, because I don't feel embarrassed and can keep going back to it.*
- *I'd much rather sit down and get into a discussion with someone because then if you don't understand something you can still ask why or say you don't understand.*

It's about paradigms...



Transmission Model



Social Constructivist model

Finding 5: Students are puzzled about goals and standards

- AEQ data 1220 AEQ returns, 23 programmes, 8 universities
- Strong statistical relationship between the **quantity and quality of feedback** and students' understanding of **goals and standards**
 $r=0.696, p<0.01$
- Strong statistical relationship between **overall satisfaction** and **clear goals and standards**
 $r=0.662, p<0.01$

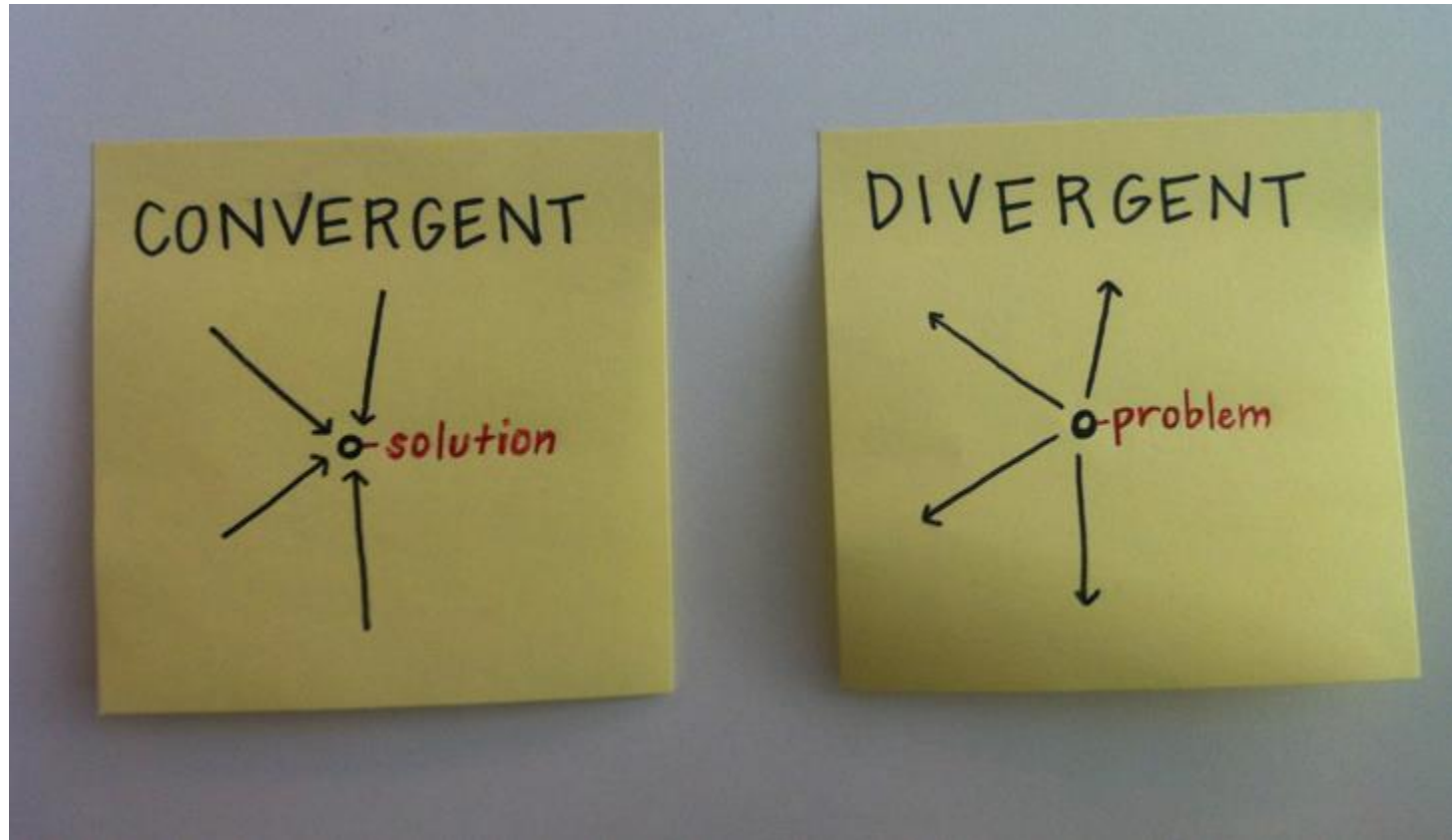
Is this the right way to mark....?

Criteria	85-100% highly effective original masterful excellent original insightful	64-70% thorough high level of competence highly effective skillfully crafted wide ranging	65-60% comprehensive effective makes appropriate connections	55-50% adequate sound critique and analysis good knowledge understands issues	45-40% limited not developed sufficiently general descriptive anecdotal some evidence
a. Demonstrates knowledge of the theory and practice of the main elements of curriculum design in Higher Education.					
b. Articulates relationship between the wider context, university and disciplines in relation to curriculum design					
c. Uses insights from literature to critically examine curriculum design and development.					
d. Critical awareness of the relationship of curriculum design to quality processes in the university context					
e. Demonstrates the capacity to reflect on professional practice in relation to curriculum design					
f. Demonstrates an understanding of the contested nature of curriculum as a construct.					

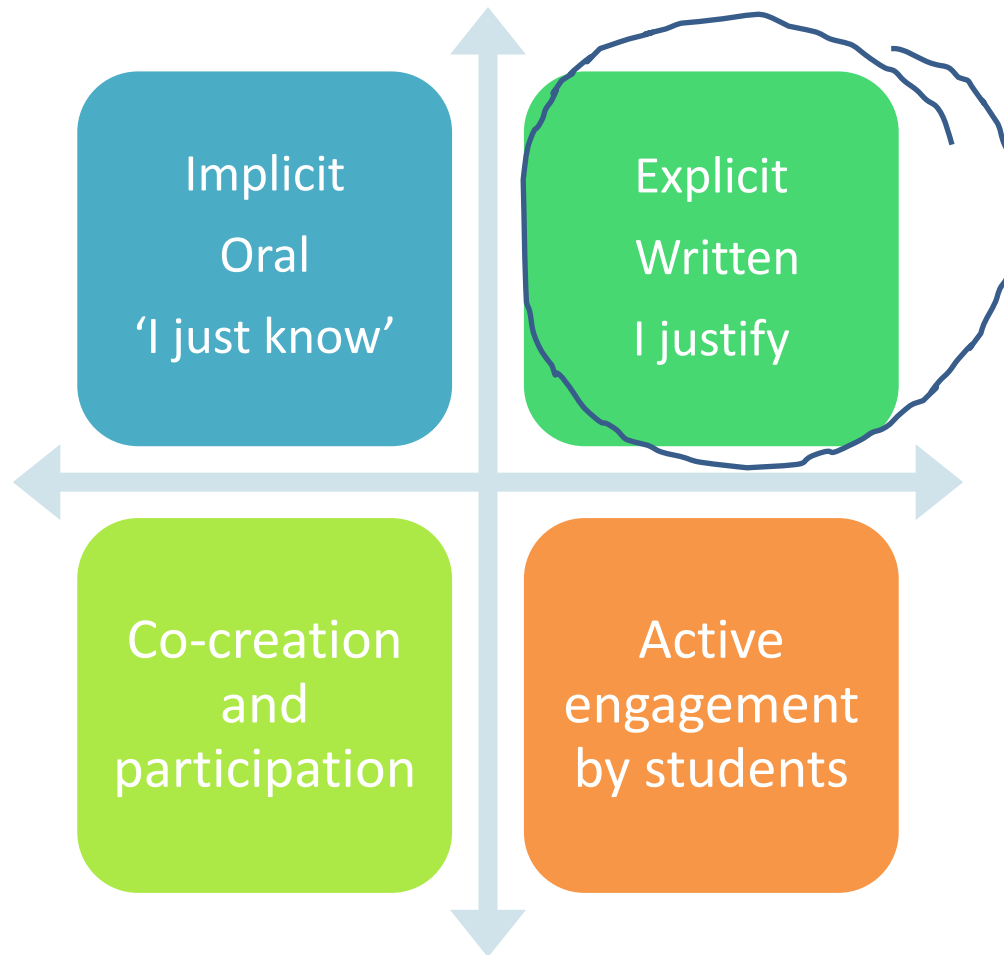
Final Mark:

Date:

It's complicated



So is transparency and accountability



Students are puzzled

Every lecturer is marking it differently, which confuses people.

We've got two tutors- one marks completely differently to the other and it's pot luck which one you get.

They have different criteria, they build up their own criteria.

Q: If you could change one thing to improve what would it be?

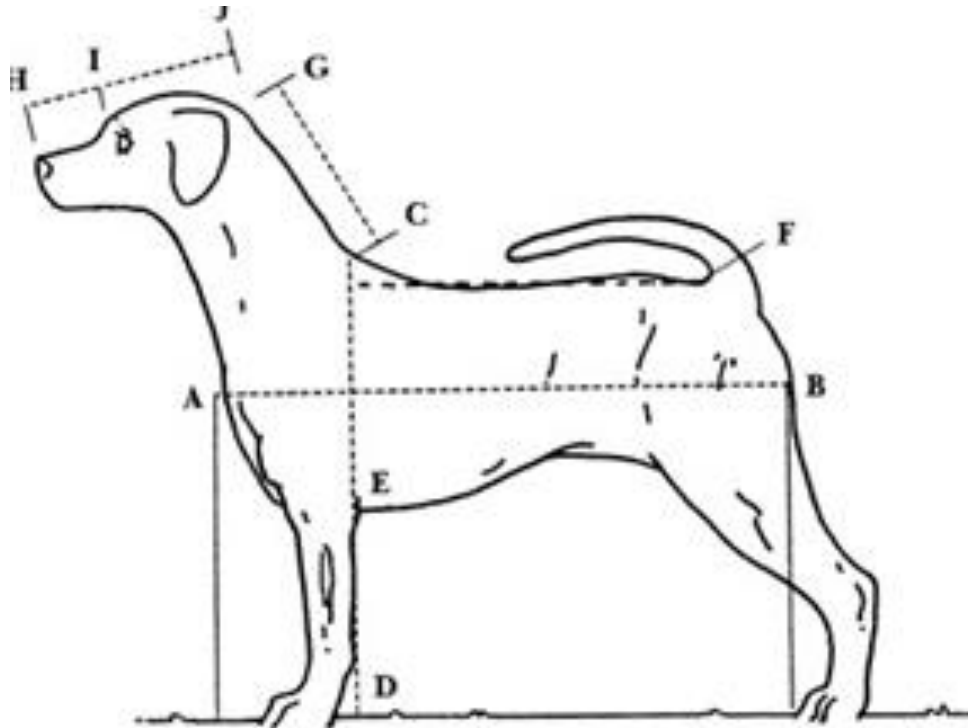
A: More consistent marking, more consistency across everything and that they would talk to each other.

It's such a guessing game.... You don't know what they expect from you.

What's going wrong here?

- *There are criteria, but I find them really strange. There's "writing coherently, making sure the argument that you present is backed up with evidence".*
- *I get the impression that they don't even look at the marking criteria. They read the essay and then they get a general impression, then they pluck a mark from the air.*
- *I don't have any idea of why it got that mark.*

Having 'an eye for a dog'



his illustration diagrams the information you should have about any breed you study. This is the science of learning about correct silhouette, which is created by a sum of correct proportions. Photo from *Solving the Mysteries of Breed Type*, by Richard G. Rick® Beauchamp.

Marking as social practice

This highlights what is perhaps one of the great failings in our academic communities of practice, in which the typical technologies of our assessment and moderation systems – marking memorandum, double-marking, external examiners – privilege reliability. These technologies are not in themselves problematic. The problem is our failing to use these technologies as opportunities for dialogue about what we really value as assessors, individually and as communities of practice (Shay 2005).

Marking as social practice

Staff-staff

Staff-
students-staff

Students-
students

Marking as social practice

Staff-staff

- Design of tasks
- Shared marking, calibration
- In-discipline dialogue

Staff-students-staff

- More process-oriented
- More discussion about complex tasks
- Dialogue about examples
- Co-creation/rewriting criteria

Students-students

- Peer-review
- Dialogue about examples
- Developing self-evaluative skills

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