



Assessment as equipping students for future challenges

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NU2012



AUSTRIAN UNIVERSITY NETWORK FOR INNOVATION IN CURRICULAR DESIGN
Göteborg 17-19 oktober 2012 NCIL

Overview

Assessment has failed us educationally, and we need to move on.

—But to where?

Peering into the future:

—we need initial and continuing practitioners that can learn and regenerate

Need a transformation in assessment *thinking*:

—towards building capacity in practitioners

And refine our *practices* accordingly

How do we reconceptualise assessment for longer term learning?

What does this imply for the changes we need to make?



Assessment as we know it has failed us as educators



It tends to drive compliance, not initiative

Fosters dependency by learners on assessors and *being* assessed

Looks to others to judge us

It is backward looking:

To what has been achieved, not what is needed

Makes us fearful rather than building confidence

Depletes capacity rather than builds it

How have we reached this state?



By Frits Ahlefeldt

Fixation on certification

Dominance of a certification agenda

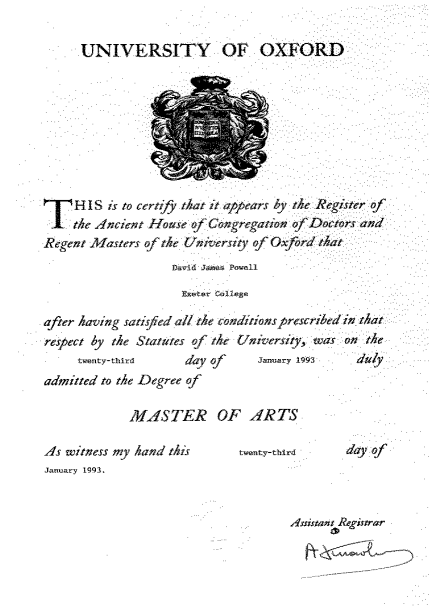
Assessment unduly framed by concerns other than learning

The agendas of other parties influence universities

Professional bodies, government agencies, media ...

Distortions created in teaching and learning

Misapplications of academic effort



Fixation on measurement

Metaphor of measurement has become dominant

technical innovations of the 1960s have framed thinking

Measurement privileges the needs of measurement

not learning

Acts of measurement influence what is being measured

that is, learning and approaches to study

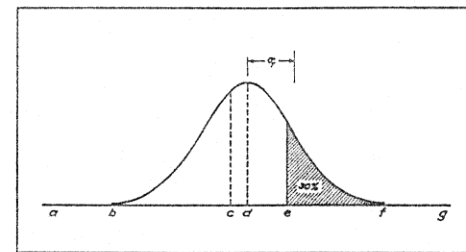


Fig. 1.



Peering into the future



- The future is unknown and, necessarily, unknowable to us
- This creates constraints and possibilities for what we do
- New knowledge, skills and dispositions will be required by our students that cannot possibly be learned now
- Whatever else, we must prepare students to cope with the unknown and build their capacity to learn when the props of a course are withdrawn and beyond

What does that imply for what and how we assess?



Thinking clearly about assessment

Assessment is a single term that describes different purposes and ideas

Different notions of assessment may be contradictory in any given situation

Assessment in practice is often a messy compromise between incompatible ends

Understanding assessment involves appreciating the dilemmas



Eras of assessment

Past

Conventional
assessment



Educational
measurement

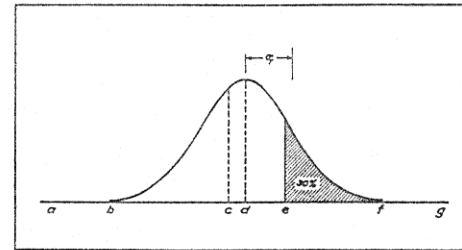
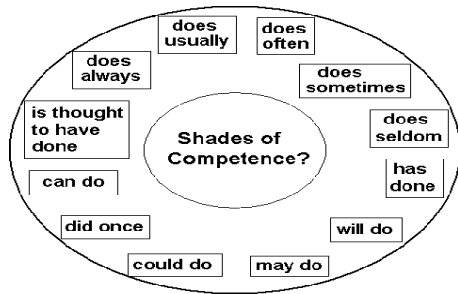


Fig. 1.

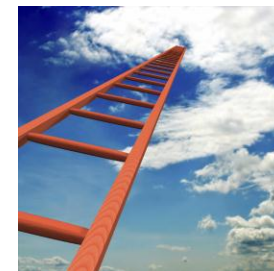
Present

Competence, authenticity,
attributes



Future

Building capacity for
judgement



Shifts in assessment thinking, so far ...

From *teacher-centred* to *learning-centred*

From *testing knowledge* to *judging outcomes*

From *assessing subjects* to *judging professional capability*

From *testing students* to *producing learners*



Purposes of assessment

Certifying achievement
(summative assessment)



Aiding learning
(formative assessment)



Purposes of assessment

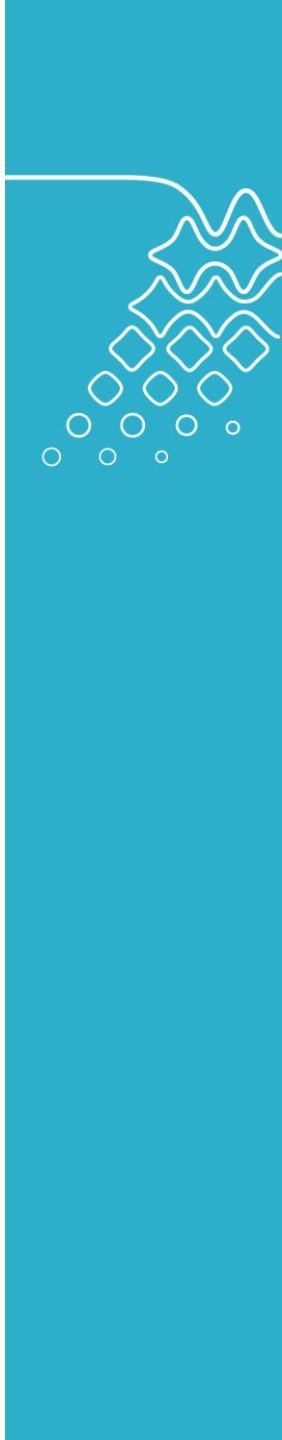
Certifying achievement
(summative assessment)



Aiding learning
(formative assessment)



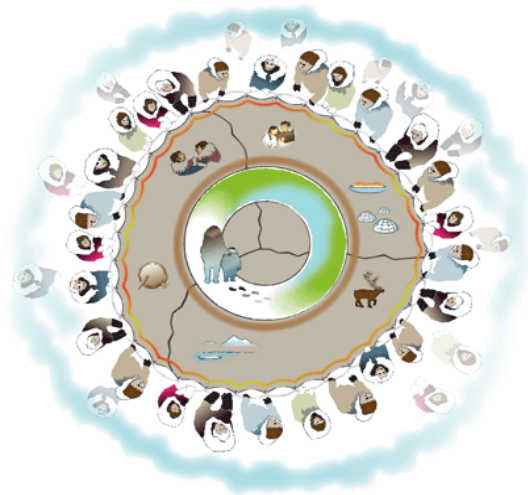
Fostering lifelong learning
(sustainable assessment)



Sustainable assessment

“Assessment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of students to meet their own future learning needs.”

(Boud, 2000)

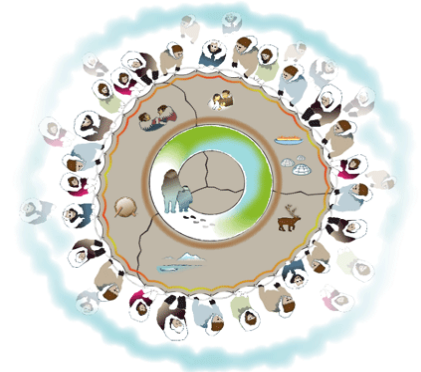


Needs also to be sustainable for academics!



Sustainable assessment implies:

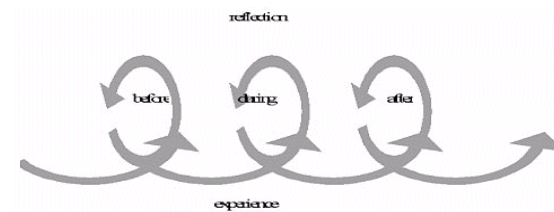
- Focus on learning outcomes needed now.
- Build *constructive alignment* between each of
 - (A) desired learning outcomes
 - (B) teaching and learning activities, and
 - (C) assessment practices.
- Equip students to learn and assess themselves beyond the immediate task.



Assessment for longer term learning

Key features:

1. sustainable
2. develops informed judgement
3. constructs reflexive learners
4. forms the becoming practitioner



Feature 1. Sustainable



Looks beyond the immediate content

To what is required beyond the end of the course

Avoids creating dependency

eg. through pleasing the lecturer, or looking to them for judgement

Focuses on higher-order knowledge and skills in context

Memorising as such is not tested because doing so fosters bad habits



Feature 2. Develops informed judgement

Students must develop the capacity to make judgments about their own learning



Otherwise they cannot be effective learners now or in the future

Assessment is about informing students' own judgements as well as making judgements on their work

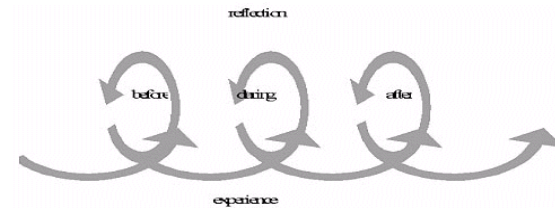
Summative assessment alone is too risky and does not equip students for new challenges. Assessment is more important than grading

Opportunities for developing informed judgement need to be staged across a program

Working across course modules is essential



Feature 3. Constructs reflexive learners



Students must necessarily be involved in assessment

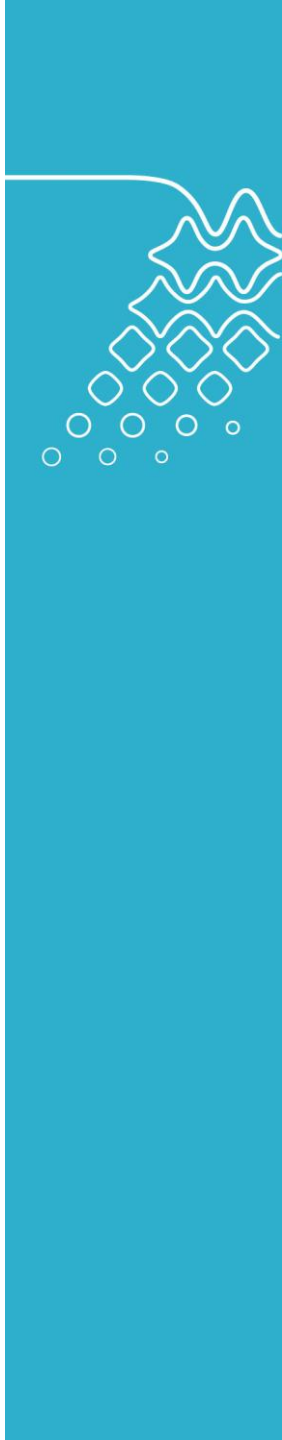
Assessment is a key influence in their formation and they are active subjects

Positions students to see themselves as learners who are pro-active and generative

Such learners take responsibility for driving learning

Focus on fostering reflexivity and self-regulation through every aspect of a course

Not just assessment tasks. Seeking and utilising feedback.



Feature 4. Forms the becoming practitioner



Assessment to help calibrate judgement

Learners act on their belief in their own judgements; if these are flawed it is more serious than particular knowledge gaps

Develops confidence and skills to manage their own learning and assessment

Understanding is not enough

Develops the capacity to work effectively with others to assist learning and mutually develop informed judgement

Assessment in work settings occurs with and for others

Assessment Futures

- Key assessment elements
- Conceptual framework
- Designing and redesigning assessments
- Examples by subject area
- Share with us
- References and links
- Glossary
- FAQs
- Contact

Contact

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ASSESSMENT FUTURES



Assessment Futures

Many students currently graduate without appropriate skills in assessment.

Assessment serves many purposes, including:

- helping students improve their learning, and
- certifying their learning.

This website is about an **important** additional purpose for assessment.

It is about equipping students for the learning and assessing they will need to do **after** completing their course and the challenges they will face after graduation.

Broad structure of the website:

This site provides information on:

- ideas and strategies to browse and consider, but no prescriptions for what you should do.
- ideas that are potentially applicable across a wide range of disciplinary areas.
- examples of how these ideas and strategies have already been used and tested.
- how to adapt and extend these ideas to suit your own subject matter and local circumstances.

Key assessment elements

- ENGAGING STUDENTS
- AUTHENTIC ACTIVITIES
- STUDENTS DESIGN ASSESSMENTS
- INTEGRATIVE TASKS
- LEARNING AND JUDGEMENT
- MODELLING AND PRACTICE
- WORKING WITH PEERS
- GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Who is this Assessment Futures website for?

- Experienced teachers in higher education, who have completed some study in the area. (It is not a basic introduction to teaching and assessment.)
- Teachers who have developed knowledge and skills in teaching and learning. They will know how to take ideas and design guidelines to develop and rework effective activities and strategies for their students.

Evidence and research findings

Assessment Futures is supported by theory and empirical evidence. For clarity this information is not foregrounded, but it can be accessed through hyperlinks to the various examples and to the references section of the site. Where evidence is partial or incomplete, the professional judgement of the author has been applied.

Research on assessment practice in Higher Education is limited and is often generated by a local problem or situation. It rarely tracks a major intervention or brings together different studies of the same thing. It tends to be suggestive and ambiguous. Implications are not always easily drawn from it.

If you have evidence that informs the practices described here, please [contact us](#).



Assessment 2020

**Seven propositions for assessment
reform in higher education**

The first steps: Assessment 2020

Staff need to get much *more savvy about assessment for learning*:

1. Assessment must always require *engagement of students in productive learning activities*
2. Active and appropriate *feedback must be consciously designed*
3. Teachers and *students must be partners* in learning
4. Students must always be *inducted well* into learning processes
5. Assessment for learning needs to be at the *centre in course design*



What would assessment that helped meet future challenges look like?

Focuses on the impact of assessment on learning as an essential assessment characteristic

Always positions students as active learners, seeking understanding of standards and feedback

Develops students' capacity to make judgments about learning, including that of others

Contributes to building learning and assessment skills beyond the course



Would such assessment be more time consuming for teachers?

Not at all!

But, it would require us to think much more clearly about what changes in students we expect courses to influence

And, it would involve a redistribution of where we focus our effort



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