**Assimilate: Assessing students at Masters level**

**A National Teaching Fellowship project led by Sally Brown**

**A work pack for refreshing assessment at Masters level**

This pack has been designed to help staff in universities and colleges who wish to review and refresh their assessment practices, using learning from the NTFS 2009-2012 project which explored innovative and authentic Masters level assessment practices.

The work pack is designed to accompany the Assimilate compendium of case studies and national overviews which provides detailed findings from the project and can be found at <http://sally-brown.net/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/120829_8791_AssmilateProjectCompendium_WEB.pdf>

Course and programme teams are invited to use this set of questions to explore how to enhance assessment approaches and methods on your own Masters programmes. The questions are based both on the outcomes of the Assimilate project and relevant literature in the field, selected elements of which is provided in the references at the end of the work pack.

|  | **Questions** | **A lot** | **A bit** | **Not at all** | **N/A** | **Comments and actions** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Induction**  **To what extent do you:**   1. provide advice and guidance prior to admissions and from the outset of the programme about what kinds of assessment methods and approaches you use on your courses? 2. Enable students to see, handle and ask questions about examples of assessment outputs (for example dissertations, projects, case studies) produced by students who have undertaken the course previously? 3. Foster your students’ assessment literacy, so that they demonstrate understanding of criteria, weightings and threshold-level achievements for each required activity? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Authenticity.** Seecase studies 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39 40, 41  **To what extent do you:**   1. set assignments that link directly with the kind of work your students will be engaged with n completion of the Masters programme? 2. Make the most of live learning environments for your assignments? 3. Ensure that assessment tasks constructively align with learning outcomes? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Multiple assessment opportunities.** See case studies 1,2,5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44  **To what extent do you:**   1. Enable your students to receive developmental support, practice and rehearse the skills they need to complete their summative assignments? 2. Offer students early opportunities to gauge their entry level capabilities and knowledge, so they can focus their energies appropriately? 3. Offer students undertaking substantial assignments such as dissertations or major projects opportunities to receive incremental support through staged submission of elements to avoid risking everything in a single terminal assignment? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Feedback.** See case studies 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 43, 44  **To what extent do you:**   1. Enable students to gain formative feedback on their work so that errors can be remediated and the quality of the output be enhanced before final submission? 2. Time assignments and feedback so that students can learn from comments on an earlier assignment and use them to improve subsequent assignments? 3. Require students proactively to respond to feedback and use it to improve the quality of their work? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Teamwork and group activity**. See case studies 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 33, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42  **To what extent do you:**   1. Require students to work on tasks as teams or groups? 2. Provide training and support to foster good team work and effective group behaviour? 3. Assess team/ group work skills? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Employability.** See case studies 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8,9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44  **To what extent do you:**   1. Seek to use fit-for-purpose assignments that test competency rather than proxy tasks? 2. Review assignment tasks to ensure that learning aligns with employability requirements? 3. Design assessments that foster and measure relevant skills? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Employer engagement**. See case studies 3, 9, 10, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 29, 35, 40, 42  **To what extent do you:**   1. Discuss regularly with employers what kinds of activities enable studies on professional programmes to develop the advanced skills they need in the workplace? 2. Involve employers in assignment design? 3. Provide briefing for employers to enable them to act as co-assessors with course team members? 4. Offer briefing and moderation opportunities for employers undertaking work-based assessment? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Making good use of technology**. See case studies 2, 6, 11,13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 26, 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 43  **To what extent do you:**   1. Enable students to submit work and receive feedback on line? 2. Require students to engage with virtual discussions and tasks on-line? 3. Provide tasks that require the retrieval and use of information on-line? 4. Use computer-supported assessment, for example, providing feedback through Moodle or Blackboard? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Peer engagement/peer assessment.** See case studies 2, 3, 6, 14, 15, 18, 19, 26, 31, 39, 43  **To what extent do you:**   1. Encourage students to review their own and each others’ work against the assignment criteria? 2. Provide training and support in peer assessment techniques? 3. Give students guidance and feedback on their own abilities to critique fellow students’ work? 4. Involve students in formative assessment of process and outcomes? 5. Engage students in summative assessment of process and outcomes? |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Programme level assessment**  The companion NTFS project on programme level assessment led by Bradford university (see <http://www.pass.brad.ac.uk/>) sought to redress the current imbalance where assessment issues are primarily investigated and discussed at module/unit level by providing evidence-based guidance and exemplars/examples to help programme leaders develop and implement effective programme focused assessment strategies.  **To what extent do you:**   1. Ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to the design of all assignments on your Masters programme to ensure that tasks are integrated and lead to high student achievement? 2. Check that you are not over-assessing students across the whole programme? 3. Check that you are not over-using the same kinds of assessment task (for example, presentations), across several components of your programme? 4. Offer synoptic assignments where learning from different modules can be assessed within a single tasks? |  |  |  |  |  |

**Selected literature informing the Masters Level Project**

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**Diamond 9**