**Examples of good practice in assessment from ‘Learning, Teaching and Assessment in Higher education: Global perspectives’, Palgrave (2015)**

1. **Authentic assessment using think-tanks in assessing Design**

Yvan Martinez, Darren Raven and Joshua Trees, London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London UK

**Introduction**

Working on undergraduate group graphic design projects at London College of Communication, we conceived a practical framework for an authentic assessment task called ’Thought Experiments in Graphic Design Education’. The initial task led to a series of candid discussions amongst students and tutors about design education in the UK.

**The problem we were aiming to solve**

Students reported performance anxiety from trying to make work that pleases tutors, indicating a debilitating preoccupation with grades complicated by a lack of confidence in directing their learning and analysing their accomplishments, especially as it pertains to knowing when to stop researching and start actually designing. They also demonstrated a general lack of interest in attending group critiques (Crits) due to a perceived lack of community and productivity. Tutors reported a concern with rising enrolment and unmanageable student/tutor ratios, a growing trend for students to feign learning to satisfy assessment criteria, and they really wanted to foster a climate where students and tutors become equal participants in the delivery of the curriculum.

To address such insights, a project was designed devoted to Inquiry, involving the formation of student ‘think-tanks’, where they could share ideas with experts, to heighten students’ cognitive and collaborative capabilities The project was structured around three foci: Systems, Processes and Actions. The first two were interpreted and prompted in relation to the participating tutors' affiliated communities of practice. Actions were interpreted and prompted by the think-tanks. Typical prompts to student inquiry included:

* When does noise become information?
* Does practice make perfect?
* Does 1 + 1 = 2 or 11?
* Who needs autonomy?

At the outset, students signed up to groups, having read the Design tutors’ practitioner statements. Tutors worked in pairs, meeting 40 students twice weekly over 7 weeks (120 students total), with each inquiry lasting 2–3 weeks. In this context, the role of tutors was not to 'teach' but rather to collaborate and facilitate, resembling something closer to Vygotsky's concept of a 'more competent peer'( quoted in Harland, 2003). Tutors approached this role in divergent ways while striving to foster a learning culture that sought to b autodidactic, non-hierarchical, non-prescriptive and reﬂexive.

Throughout the process, think-tanks agreed, applied and revised their own assessment criteria, and tutors examined each think-tank's ability to examine itself. Think-tankers initiated, negotiated and evaluated each other's progress and outcomes responding to prompts.

The tutors subsequently reflected on experience of leading inquiry-based learning for potential future use. A feedback questionnaire confirmed an attitudinal shift among students regarding assessment, as well as increased engagement, reinforced by better attendance records. Unlike much group work, students didn’t complain about the grades they earned, probably because how well they performed was largely in their own hands.

**Learning points**

The project provided challenges to students and tutors about their practices and perceptions of teaching and assessing design projects. Unlike traditional studio crits which typically occur after a student has been working in isolation, the formation of think-tanks provided a support system defined by continuous feedback, exchange and exposure to design work and the working methods of others. In turn, students demonstrated higher levels of initiative, resourcefulness and solidarity.

The think-tanks exhibited the term’s work publicly, which was something we wouldn’t have done previously. Students and staff feel we are learning, creating and achieving and have more ownership of the process. We also encountered some ambivalence and resistance as we gradually broke down conventional learning habits, particularly students’ high dependency on instruction from tutors, despite receiving hours of feedback from both peers and tutors. Most eventually learned to compare input from multiple sources and trust their own analysis.

Involving students in the setting of assessment criteria also required some coaxing: initially think-tanks struggled to imagine what might be missing from their work before looking outwards to see how other fields assess performance. Some rewrote the university's official 'marking matrix' in friendlier language, others introduced new criteria such as 'authenticity', 'hack value' and 'unintentional meaning' and some chose not to assign grades at all, focusing instead on the quality of oral and written feedback. Assessing the think-tanks' ability to assess themselves also proved tricky at times, because, students tended to regress towards self-conscious performance if they sensed they were being observed.

Positive side-effects included learning to share research, balancing the time devoted to researching and making, and avoiding the tendency to fall into 'research holes'. In contrast to what is expected from inquiry-based learning in a science education, within our design setting, we noted a tendency for some students at first to treat the inquiries as themes rather than opportunities for critical thinking. Perhaps the most important by-product of this approach was the emergence of a 'meta playground' where students actively participated in assessment and taught themselves to transform examination anxiety into a strategy for taking control of their learning, and articulating their accomplishments rather than falsifying them. One of our students said:

 ‘I used to look at a mark-sheet about half-way through a project, and check that I was ticking boxes. Now I've learnt that a mark-scheme should be used as a more integral part of the decision making process, right from the very beginning of the project. It should inform the work, not the other way round.’

**References**

Martinez, Y. & Trees, J. (2013). Thought Experiments in Graphic Design Education.

Harland, T. (2003). Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development and Problem-based Learning: Linking a theoretical concept with practice through action research. Teaching in Higher Education, 8(2), p.263-272.

1. **Taking the pain out of managing assessments in higher education.**

**Dr Mark Glynn, Dublin City University, Ireland**

**Introduction**

Assessment is intricately linked to teaching and learning and plays an important part in the learning process. Indeed, both summative and formative assessments inform progress and guide learning; it is essential to the accreditation process; and, results are used in all sorts of ways to measure outcomes and success of the student, teacher, course, or institute. Academic institutions are obliged to measure and prove that the learner has met specific learning outcomes of their course. This ‘proof’ is provided through assessment (Angelo, 1993). The challenge for most lecturers is to get the balance right between offering enough assessment, with appropriate levels of feedback without overburdening the student and ourselves, which is not an easy challenge to meet. To further complicate things there needs to be communication and coordination between lecturers delivering different modules across the same programme to ensure that the aforementioned balance is also achieved with respect to the program as a whole. The Learning Management System (LMS) is a crucial tool when it comes to addressing this challenge and here various features of how an LMS can be used to manage assessments efficiently are described.

**Transparency**

Good practice dictates that we should be transparent with our assessment. A lecturer can use the LMS to post key information about assignments; descriptions, deadlines, and its value towards to the final grade. If staff use the LMS properly, it will automatically create a calendar of assessments for students, and if linked up to their smart phones, they can be sent reminders directly about impending (or missed) deadlines. The LMS we use at DCU (Moodle) also enables lecturers to provide rubrics or marking guides to comment on and correct students’ work. Both rubrics and marking guides can be presented to students in advance of an assessment or afterwards, thereby providing consistent structure to the lecturer’s feedback, helping offer transparency for the students

**Administration**

For lecturers, the simple act of collecting assignments from students can be troublesome. However Moodle can provide a ‘virtual postbox’ where students can submit their assignments. Then there can be no argument about whether students have submitted their assignments as all are stored in Moodle, and it also puts a timestamp on the students submission, providing clarity for both the student and lecturer.

Using an LMS can be very helpful when managing group assignments. First Moodle can easily allow a lecturer to either allocate students to groups or get them to choose their own, thereby removing a potentially time -consuming task for lecturers. Furthermore, when a lecturer provides a grade and feedback to one student the other students in the group are automatically given the same grade and feedback. To illustrate the power of this, feature if there are assignments with four students per group the lecturers workload is reduced by 75% if they use Moodle to manage mark distribution over doing it individually.

**Calculation and issuing of grades**

Moodle provides a Gradebook facility that allows lecturers to grade all assignments out of 100 and then the lecturer can choose to weight the grades before collating them all together for individual assignments and presenting the total course grade to students. Additionally, Moodle can be set up to provide feedback to the student but withhold the grade, for example, until exam boards are complete or marks moderated. This has the advantage that students tend to concentrate on the feedback rather than get distracted by the grade. In addition, a lecturer can determine which grades from a wide range of tasks count towards the final mark. Hence, a lecturer may set several assignments and/or online quizzes for revision purposes where only some of the marks obtained count towards the final course mark. Alternatively a lecturer may set several assignments and can set Moodle to only count the top three or perhaps four assignments.

Moodle has many features that can support the assessment and management of assignments, only a few of which are highlighted here: technology can be used in many ways to enhance the assessment experience for both the student and lecturer.

1. **Designing First year Assessment and Feedback** Ruth Pickford, Leeds Metropolitan University

**Introduction**

The first few weeks at university can be emotionally traumatising and lonely. Many students drop out of university in this period and for many this is a personal disaster. How successful students are depends very much on their peer support networks and the extent to which they feel they belong to a cohort. In those early days, we are encouraged by Mantz Yorke (1999) to believe that assessment that helps students get the feel of what is required of them without allowing them to feel overwhelmed or discouraged can help. Royce Sadler argues that:

‘Students need to be exposed to, and gain experience in making judgements about, a variety of works of different quality…They need planned rather than random exposure to exemplars, and experience in making judgements about quality. They need to create verbalised rationales and accounts of how various works could have been done better. Finally, they need to engage in evaluative conversations with teachers and other students. Together, these three provide the means by which students can develop a concept of quality that is similar in essence to that which the teacher possesses, and in particular to understand what makes for high quality’. (Sadler , 2101p. 544).

**The ‘Fe, Fi, Fo, Fun’ approach to assessment and feedback**

For this reason, using a National Teaching Fellowship grant, a team at Leeds Metropolitan University developed a project to personalise the first year of study through promoting effective feedback and assessment, based on a ‘Fe, Fi, Fo, Fun’ approach (in a reference to the daunting utterances of the giant in the European fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk), focusing on students’ **Fee**lings, **Fi**tting in, **Fo**rmative activity and **Fun**. Academic staff working with us on the project:

1. Designed assignments that provided opportunities for students to work together and build peer-to-peer and student-tutor working relationships;
2. Used assessment and feedback to empower students to develop a sense of control over their own learning;
3. Ensured that teaching was shaped by diagnostic assessment;
4. Ensured that students regularly gave and received formative feedback so they could gauge what good performance looked like;
5. Worked in partnership with students to design assessments with an element of choice of topic, method and criteria and with some flexibility in timings;
6. Built in opportunities for students to use feedback shortly after receiving it, to reflect on learning and to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. Designed assessments that develop underpinning skills for lifelong learning;
8. Created assignments that weren’t excessively onerous to mark and manage;
9. Focused on engaging students through enjoyable assessment tasks;
10. Designed challenging assignments that enabled learning though experimentation in a non threatening environment.

As Diane Nutt argues: ‘By introducing real relevance at the beginning of their studies, you can engage students. Once they are involved, they are more likely to stay…’

Colleagues across the university provided 50 suggestions in a Staff Guide to help them consider how to change the design of first level assessment and feedback to help students thrive, succeed and stay and these are detailed at http://repository- intralibrary.leedsmet.ac.uk/IntraLibrary?command=open-preview&learning\_object\_key=i782n732249t

These include**:**

* Offering immersive early experiences, enabling students at the start of courses to spend a significant proportion together as a group;
* Using group projects and tasks to encourage co-learning;
* Building in time to share oral feedback to students collectively;
* In a supportive environment, asking students to comment on each other’s work and give positive feedback to their peers;
* Involving students from earlier years to mentor first year students;
* Designing authentic tasks so students can visualise themselves in professional roles;
* Using simulations based on real-life scenarios;
* Creating assignments that stretch students early on and progressively become more difficult so students at all levels are challenged;
* Providing on-line tests where students can practise and assess their understanding in private;
* Focusing in early tasks on students’ successes rather than their mistakes.

We also provided a student guide which helped students understand how assessment at university level works, and developed in students what Sambell and Hubbard term ‘assessment literacy’ whereby students gain a fuller understanding of assessment systems and practices, thereby becoming more successful in their studies. Throughout the project we were keen to use assessment and feedback to empower students to develop confidence and competence in a supportive and developmental climate.

**References**

Nutt, D, Times Higher Educational Supplement, 21 February 2008

Pickford, R. (2009) ‘Designing First-Year Assessment and Feedback: a guide to university staff’, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University press

Sadler, D. R. (2010). Beyond feedback:  Developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*(5), 535-550.

Sambell, Kay, and Anntain Hubbard. "The Role of Formative ‘Low-stakes’ Assessment in Supporting Non-traditional Students' Retention and Progression in Higher Education: Student Perspectives." *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* 6.2 (2004): 25-36.

Yorke, M. (1999) *Leaving Early: Undergraduate Non-completion in Higher Education,* London: Routledge.

1. **Using authentic assessment with early years student teachers in Spain**

Victor M. López-Pastor: University of Valladolid, Faculty of Education, Segovia, and convenor of the Network for Formative and Shared Assessment in Spain

**Introduction**

This account describes approaches to authentic assessment in an education faculty in Spain where third and fourth year students are assessed on their learning while on teaching practice in schools. This assessment works well because in addition to evaluating students’ competences, the programme requires students to demonstrate their reflection on practice and to demonstrate development over their period of study. A cohort of around 80 student in their 3rd and 4th years spend one semester in each year in practice in schools, for 10 or 12 weeks.

**Assessing practice**

Much assessment in Spain is very traditional, but in this context students aren’t just summatively assessed, they receive much formative assessment from regular meetings with the course tutor. These involve dialogical processes with individual students and groups of around twelve students in regular discussions with their tutor, to ensure deep learning occurs, just checking-off of competences. Importantly, the classroom teacher who oversees the work of the student teacher in the host school is also involved in separate discussions directly with the student and the university tutor. Capabilities which are assessed include planning and competence in teaching practice, but also include professional behaviours such as punctuality and the extent of deep engagement with the host school. A significant component of the assessment is a reflective diary which students write daily. In addition they produce an extended reflective report of around 60 pages, which is incrementally produced following classroom discussions. This includes students’ analytical reviews of the scholarly literature they are reading for the seminars, and an element of action research whereby they choose an aspect of their teaching to investigate, and undertake a small-scale review in relation to it.Marks are broken down as follows: 50% for reports by host teachers on students’ work in practice, 30% for students’ own reflective accounts and diaries, and 20% for tutors’ assessment of their contributions in seminars.

**Review**

Victor chooses this approach with his groups of students because he thereby ensures that students learn better and more deeply than students who do not benefit from this approach. Student opinion of the assessment approach is divided: some students really like it and feel that it helps them to learn a great deal, while others do not appreciate the high workload which involves extended reading and the demands being made on them to think deeply about their practice.

Victor regularly interviews teachers in the host schools, and they really like this approach, because they perceive it as rigorous and supportive, and also because they are able in the regular visits made by the tutor to the school to immediately to resolve any problems that students are experiencing before the end of the teaching practice. This thereby also serves as in-service training, support and guidance for the teachers themselves, who are commonly not given much formal training on how to mentor students.

Victor himself appreciates this approach because as well as benefiting students, it means he builds supportive learning partnerships with the host teachers, and they help to ensure that he maintains his own currency and authentic understanding of changing classroom practices in schools, informing his own continuous professional development. This provides a quality control over the whole process, because professionals in the classroom are contributing to the wider education of the students.

Although there is no formal evidence that students using this approach achieve better, within Victor’s teaching groups, those students who fully embrace this approach get much better marks overall for their teaching, and on their evidence of practice on this module.

**Problematic issues**

Not all tutors on this programme adopt Victor’s approach, so students on the same programme may have variable assessment experiences, and the interpretation of marking criteria across the programme is not identical.

A further emergent issue which has been addressed is the potential disparity in formative assessment experience between the majority of students on placements around Segovia, and a minority of students who undertake placements in England, Ghana as well as in cities elsewhere in Spain. This is addressed by staff making occasional visits in person when possible, but to a much greater extent by virtual support on a regular basis provided through synchronous discussions via Moodle, as well as ongoing telephone and email contact with students and tutors in host schools.

The model therefore lends itself to usage in other regions and nations as well as in other professional disciplines.

1. **Negotiated assignments on a Graduate Diploma in Higher Education**

**Melanie Miller, UNITEC, New Zealand**

**Background**

Academics have to complete (within two years at the start of their contract) a tertiary teaching qualification, if they have not graduated with one recently, many will have been teaching for some time, and have achieved competence teaching and learning. Three negotiated courses at 15, 30 and 60 credit points were developed with this in mind at UNITEC and participants undertake an assessed developmental activity project as an alternative way of achieving the graduate profile other than through course work, potentially including evidence of student understanding of how they engage effectively in the bi-cultural context of a multi-cultural New Zealand and demonstrating their personal growth. They are expected to:

* Design a project that involves a development activity that aims to improve the effectiveness of learning and has outcomes that accord with identified aspects of the graduate profile, and is appropriate for the assigned level and credit rating;
* Develop and negotiate a learning contract for the project, including resource, timeline and supervision arrangements;
* Implement and complete the project, reflect regularly on progress, and renegotiate the contract whenever required.

This requires them to be able to demonstrate a command of wide-ranging highly specialised technical or scholastic and basic research skills across a major discipline, involving the full range of procedures in a major discipline and apply them in complex variable and specialised contexts. To do this they need to demonstrate knowledge, the capability to analyse, transform and evaluate abstract data and concepts and create appropriate responses to resolve given or contextual abstract problems. It is the student’s responsibility to plan, resource and manage processes within broad parameters and functions with complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and/ or group outcomes.

**Assessment**

Submission of work is negotiated but can be a single package of evidence of achievement for assessment, which includes a critical self-reflection. An oral examination is used to ensure that each student considers issues arising in the assessment of the package including clarifying ownership and achievement issues related to collaborative work.

The projects are negotiated individually and once they have agreed scheduled meetings with the supervisor, s/he is responsible for ensuring that there is appropriate rigour in the work undertaken. Projects may be individual or collaborative or a hybrid. Where they are collaborative, candidates must submit their own evidence and where evidence is shared, the oral examination is used to resolve ownership and achievement issues. Mātauranga Maori teaching philosophy throughout the above teaching and learning approaches will be embedded

**Maori values from the Mātauranga Maori**

Aroha: Care, love and respect

Whanaungatanga: Working together, sense of family

Iwitanga: Those qualities and characteristics that make aniwi or hapu unique and underpin a

shared whakapapa, history and identity

Whakapapa: Genealogical descent: The descendencyfrom the universe, through atua, to land, air, water, and people

Tino Rangatiratanga: Acts of authority, self-determinationand power

Manaakitanga: Reciprocal and unqualified acts ofgiving, caring, hospitality

Awhinatanga: Assist, help, care for, give assistance and help to others

Koha: acts of giving

Whakapono: Act of believing or having faith and trust in others

To fulfil either of the two negotiated courses (120 credits), students can use for example evidence a new course they have developed, reflecting on their personal experience in the teaching field and making use of and evidencing their often extensive experience. These courses aim to be as flexible as possible enabling a variety of self-directed means to demonstrate they have met the required outcomes. They can complete one of two different learning contracts, either submitting achieved to date or a plan of what they intend to do to cover the graduate profile. These means include critical reflection, an enquiring, flexible and critical attitude encompassing adult education and research, appropriate attitudes, values and skills for competent practice, use of current theoretical knowledge relevant to their field, an awareness of diversity issues and an ability to function positively in a multicultural society, an understanding of the relationship between technology and learning, the ability effectively to use appropriate methodologies for open, flexible and on-line learning situations and an understanding of the practices underpinning self and peer assessment.

**Making the most of opportunities**

The principle problematic area lies in getting full-time academics to complete in time for submission, hence the requirement to complete a learning contract with timelines and have this approved by programme committee, with progress monitored by, the Programme Leader . The handbook provides guidance on required elements that must be achieved. A negotiated approach is an excellent way to fast-track competent academics to gain a qualification they are required to complete, but needs consistent mentoring and supervising and the programmes at first had low completion rates.

Negotiation on a one-to-one basis is time-consuming but while there are no set face to face classes, encouraging several course participants to enrol together can be helpful. Face-to-face time ,email conversations, use of CISCO jabber/Skype are all used, and timetabling these collectively can be time-efficient . A range of resources, including examples of presentations, portfolios, videos, poems, PowerPoint presentations, and online innovative tools have been devised by our most creative students, which fellow course participants can view to help them design their own assessment submissions. As is common in the Maori /New Zealand context, students may use oral presentations in a public context as part of their evidencing of achievement.