Alienation to engagement through programme assessment

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Assessment Research Symposium
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@solentlearning
@tansyjtweets
Today’s session

• A modular problem
• An alienation problem
• An engagement solution
The modular degree
A state of alienation?
TESTA is a joint National Teaching Fellowship Project with four partner universities of similar character: Bath Spa, Chichester, Winchester and Worcester. It is funded by the Higher Education Academy for three years (2009-2012). TESTA aims to improve the quality of student learning through addressing programme-level 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.
Mixed methods approach

TESTA Programme Audit

Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ)

Student Focus Groups

Programme Team Meeting

Case Study
TESTA definitions

**Summative:**
graded assessment which counts towards the degree

**Formative:**
Does not count: ungraded, required task with feedback
Does Variation matter?

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education

Struggling and juggling: a comparison of student assessment loads across research and teaching-intensive universities

Carmen Tomas & Tansy Jessop

To cite this article: Carmen Tomas & Tansy Jessop (2018): Struggling and juggling: a comparison of student assessment loads across research and teaching-intensive universities, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463355
## Typical A&F patterns

73 programmes in 14 unis (Jessop and Tomas 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volume of summative assessment</strong></td>
<td>Below 33</td>
<td>40-48</td>
<td>More than 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volume of formative only</strong></td>
<td>Below 1</td>
<td>5-19</td>
<td>More than 19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>% of tasks by examinations</strong></td>
<td>Below 11%</td>
<td>22-31%</td>
<td>More than 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variety of assessment methods</strong></td>
<td>Below 8</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>More than 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written feedback in words</strong></td>
<td>Less than 3,800</td>
<td>6,000-7,600</td>
<td>More than 7,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Medium (Research-Intensive)</td>
<td>Medium (Teaching Intensive)</td>
<td>Mann-Whitney U test results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summative</td>
<td>41-79 (Median 50)</td>
<td>34-41 (Median 35)</td>
<td>RI*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative</td>
<td>1-26 (Median 3)</td>
<td>3-17 (Median 7)</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Examinations</td>
<td>27-42% (Median 30%)</td>
<td>5-19% (Median 10%)</td>
<td>RI*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety assessment methods</td>
<td>8-10 (Median 8)</td>
<td>12-14 (Median 15)</td>
<td>TI*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In pairs: two minute pause

• Why is there variation across university types?

• How does it compare with your context?

• Does variation matter for student learning?
1. High summative: low formative

- High summative on UK, Irish, NZ and Indian degrees
- Low formative to summative ratio of 1:8
- Formative weakly practised and understood
Assessment Arms Race
A lot of people don’t do wider reading. You just focus on your essay question.

In Weeks 9 to 12 there is hardly anyone in our lectures. I'd rather use those two hours of lectures to get the assignment done.

It’s been non-stop assignments, and I’m now free of assignments until the exams – I’ve had to rush every piece of work I’ve done.
It was really useful. We were assessed on it but we weren’t officially given a grade, but they did give us feedback on how we did. 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.
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.

The lecturers do formative assessment but we don’t get any feedback on it.
Why formative matters

1) Low-risk way of learning from feedback (Sadler, 1989)
2) Fine-tune understanding of goals (Boud 2000, Nicol 2006)
3) Feedback to lecturers to adapt teaching (Hattie, 2009)
4) Cycles of reflection and collaboration (Biggs 2003; Nicol & McFarlane Dick 2006)
5) Encourages and distributes student effort (Gibbs 2004).
How to encourage formative

Go to www.menti.com and use the code 80 04 02

Choose your top three strategies for engaging students in formative assessment
Case Study 1

- Systematic reduction of summative across whole business school
- Systematic ramping up of formative
- Whole department shift, experimentation, less risky together
Case Study 2

• Problem: silent seminar, students not reading
• Public platform blogging
• Current academic texts
• In-class
• Threads and live discussion
• Linked to summative
Case study 3

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVFwQzlVFy0
Principles of good formative

1. Rebalance summative and formative
2. Whole programme approach
3. Link formative and summative
4. Authentic, public domain tasks
5. Creative, collaborative, challenging tasks
6. Relational and conversational feedback
2. Disconnected feedback
The feedback is generally focused on the module because it’s at the end of the module, it doesn’t feed into our future work. If 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. 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”.
It was like ‘Who’s Holly?’ It’s that relationship where you’re just a student.

Because they have to mark so many that our essay becomes lost in the sea that they have to mark.

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’.
A feedback dialogue

I like your hat.
Your face is ugly.
But your top is nice.
Your essay lacked structure and your referencing is problematic.

Your classes are boring and I don’t really like you 😊😊
Ways to be dialogic

- Conversation: who starts the dialogue?
- Cycles of reflection across modules
- Quick generic feedback
- Peer feedback (especially on formative)
- Technology: audio, screencast and blogging
- From feedback as ‘telling’...
- ... to feedback as asking questions
Students feedback to us

Are you listening?
1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?

2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?

3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?

4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?

5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)

Stephen Brookfield’s Critical Incident Questionnaire  http://bit.ly/1loUzq0


