

# Sustainable Programme Assessment for Pharmacy Students

Dr Buge Apampa & Mrs Judy Cohen

Medway School of Pharmacy, The Universities of Kent and Greenwich at Medway, Central Avenue, Chatham Maritime, Kent

## INTRODUCTION

With the assertion that assessment shapes the experience of students and influences their learning behaviour more than teaching, assessment in higher education has come under increasingly close scrutiny and is a key domain in the annual National Student Survey (NSS). Poor early experience of assessments may be associated with high attrition rates. Concerns around high attrition rates of MPharm stage 1 students and relatively poor scores on Assessment and Feedback in the NSS in 2010-2011, led to assessment practice being identified as a possible contributory factor adversely affecting students' learning.

**TESTA**, an evidence based approach to mapping programme assessment environments was employed as a tool to critically evaluate assessment processes and procedures and support the development of an effective assessment strategy.

## AIM

To promote the **cognitive development** of pharmacy students through a sustainable programme **assessment** practice that promotes meaningful learning

## METHOD

12-month audit utilising **TESTA** methodology. Combined data sets obtained from three sources provided a bird's eye view of assessments resulting in assessment programme portraits.

### Students

- ❖ Assessment Experience Questionnaire: 28 question survey instrument (9 scales) designed to measure student perceptions of programme assessments
- ❖ Focus group meetings

### Module leaders

- ❖ Programme assessment patterns

### Programme documentation

- ❖ MPharm assessment regimen

## AUDIT CYCLE



2011

- ❖ **TESTA** audit of programme assessment practice
- ❖ Assessment programme portrait
- ❖ Interventions:
  - Volume of summative assessments reduced
  - Formative assessment opportunities rebalanced
  - Use of reflective learning tools increased

2012

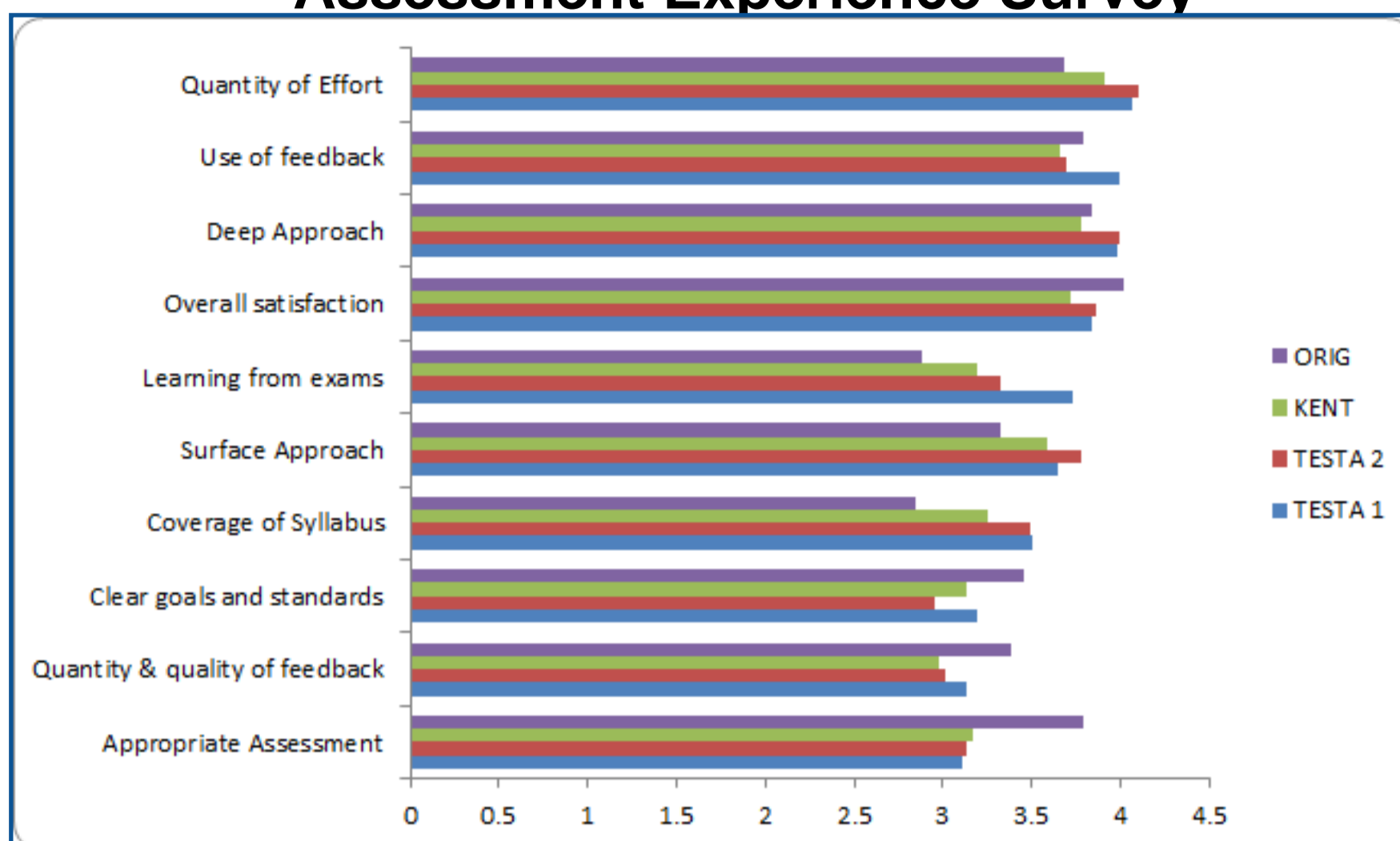
- ❖ **TESTA** audit of programme assessment practice repeated
- ❖ Retention and progression data reviewed
- ❖ Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy for the new integrated MPharm developed

2013

- ❖ Renewed focus on role of formative assessments and the development of self-directed lifelong learners.
- ❖ Redesigning of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments to underpin sustainable programme assessment
- ❖ Programme revalidation

## RESULTS

### Assessment Experience Survey



### Programme Portrait

Categories	MPharm 2010/11	MPharm 2011/12	Mean of 9 programmes (3-year)	Range over 9 programmes (3-year)
Total number of assessments	107	101	47	32 – 80
Summative assessments	68	59	37	26 – 52
Formative assessments	24	29	11	0 – 41
Variety of summative assessments	12	13	13	7 – 17
Percentage of timed exams	79%	64.4%	15.2%	3% - 34%
Feedback returned	officially 21 days; but up to 42 days	Officially 21 days	20.4 days	17 – 28 days
Volume of oral feedback	942 hrs	664 hrs	6 hrs 40 min	37min – 30hrs
Contact hours (% total hours)	1513hrs 31.5%	1357hrs 27.7%	-	-

## CONCLUSION

- ❖ No quick fix in relation to assessments; time is required to fully embed changes in assessment practice
- ❖ Students do not necessarily recognise all forms of feedback if not linked to future assessments
- ❖ High quality formative assessments which feed forward required for sustainable assessment and lifelong learning
- ❖ Increase in formative assessments provided more structured opportunities for feedback and was appreciated. **"..we had a mock paper and they put feedback online of what, they required... that was good.** More opportunities for use of feedback embedded in new MPharm curriculum
- ❖ Staff commitment is critical; **TESTA** provides a useful methodology for the visualization and promotion of sustainable assessment practice

## REFERENCES

1. AEQ with Scales: TESTA website. Available at [www.testa.ac.uk/resources/research-toolkit/](http://www.testa.ac.uk/resources/research-toolkit/) Accessed 28 May 2013
2. Boud D. (2000). Sustainable assessment: Rethinking assessment for the Learning Society. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 22, 2, 151-167