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Student-Faculty Partnership in Assessment

Encountering emotion and enhancing wellbeing in students

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**Royal
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1. Context – student wellbeing challenges

- Number of students disclosing a mental health condition has tripled since 2007/08 (Equality Challenge Unit, 2015)
- Students report significantly lower levels of mental wellbeing than the general population - more so for minority groups (Ferguson, 2017)
- HE sector is experiencing a 'mental health crisis' (The Guardian, August 2018)
- 20% Australian students experiencing a mental health issue (Carter *et al.* 2017) and a fifth of Canadian post-secondary students identifying as depressed, anxious or battling other mental health issues (Pang, 2017)

2. Student learning & wellbeing

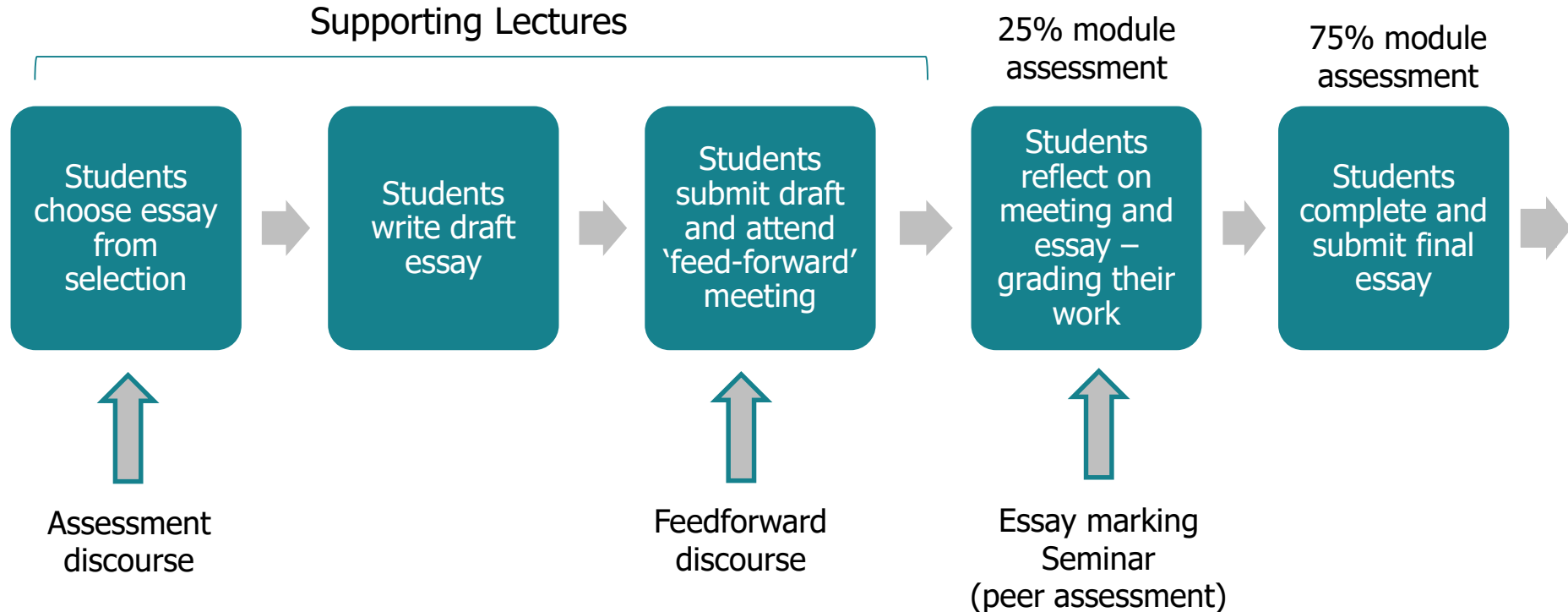
- To enhance student wellbeing in HE, we need to work more closely with the emotional realm of learning
- If we adopt a pedagogic partnership approach, we have the opportunity to foreground student emotions
- To realise this process, faculty and students must be willing to work within borderland spaces of partnership (Hill et al., 2016, 2019a)

3. Student-faculty pedagogic partnership in assessment

- AY 2015-2016 - new assessment approach implemented on a second year geography module in a British university
- Aimed to improve student learning experience through dialogic feed-forward assessment
- Focus was cognitive:
 - Did the approach assert a **positive influence on the student learning experience?**
 - Did it **enhance student performance and raise NSS scores related to feedback?**



Module teaching and assessment structure



Qualitative case study approach

- Individual semi-structured interviews ... two consecutive year 2 cohorts at end of module (2015-16 and 2016-17) ... analysed thematically via grounded theory
- $n = 44$ (x 30 mins), 61% response rate: male = 45% female = 55%
- Group semi-structured interviews with level 3 students elucidating post-assignment behaviour
- Essay performance data pre- and post-assessment intervention (inferential stats)
- Answers to NSS feedback questions (asked in the interviews)

Results - Enhanced learning experience

- **Conversation** compelled students to **engage critically** with their work:

*'When I have had drafts handed back to me and it's just written over, either **I don't understand what they are trying to say**, or it's not clear enough. I can ask you questions **if we're talking to each other about it, it's easier to see things** ... It's definitely better to talk about it'*

*'I've had it before where you get electronic feedback and **you might not be sure what some of the comments mean** ... being able to discuss it is important. You get that progress and can **discuss how you can change it as opposed to just saying this is wrong**'*

Results - Enhanced learning experience

Band (%)	2011-2012 (%)	2012-2013 (%)	2015-2016 (%)	2016-2017 (%)
0-39 (inc. NS)	16	5	0	5.5*
40-49	9	14	3*	5.5*
50-59	34	38	28	17
60-69	41	38	58	58
70-100	0	5	11	14
Number (n)	32	37	36	36

Significantly higher marks 2015-17 v 2011-13
($p = <0.0001$)

Average Ecology mark 4.5% higher than average mark for other second year optional modules
($p = 0.01$)



Dialogic assessment

* Did not have a meeting

The emergence of the affective realm

- Inherently emotional experience for students of receiving assessment feedback
- Clear evolution in emotions over the feed-forward process:

apprehensive, scared, disappointed, upset, ashamed



enjoyment, satisfaction, motivation

- For some, the meetings were cathartic, reducing their anxiety as they 'came clean' with their level of progress - regained in-task self-efficacy

- Students noted that the individualised nature of the meeting made them feel valued:

*'I definitely felt like **you cared** about what I was getting'*

- Consciously encountering and talking through emotions in a collaborative manner supported a personalised and inclusive learning experience

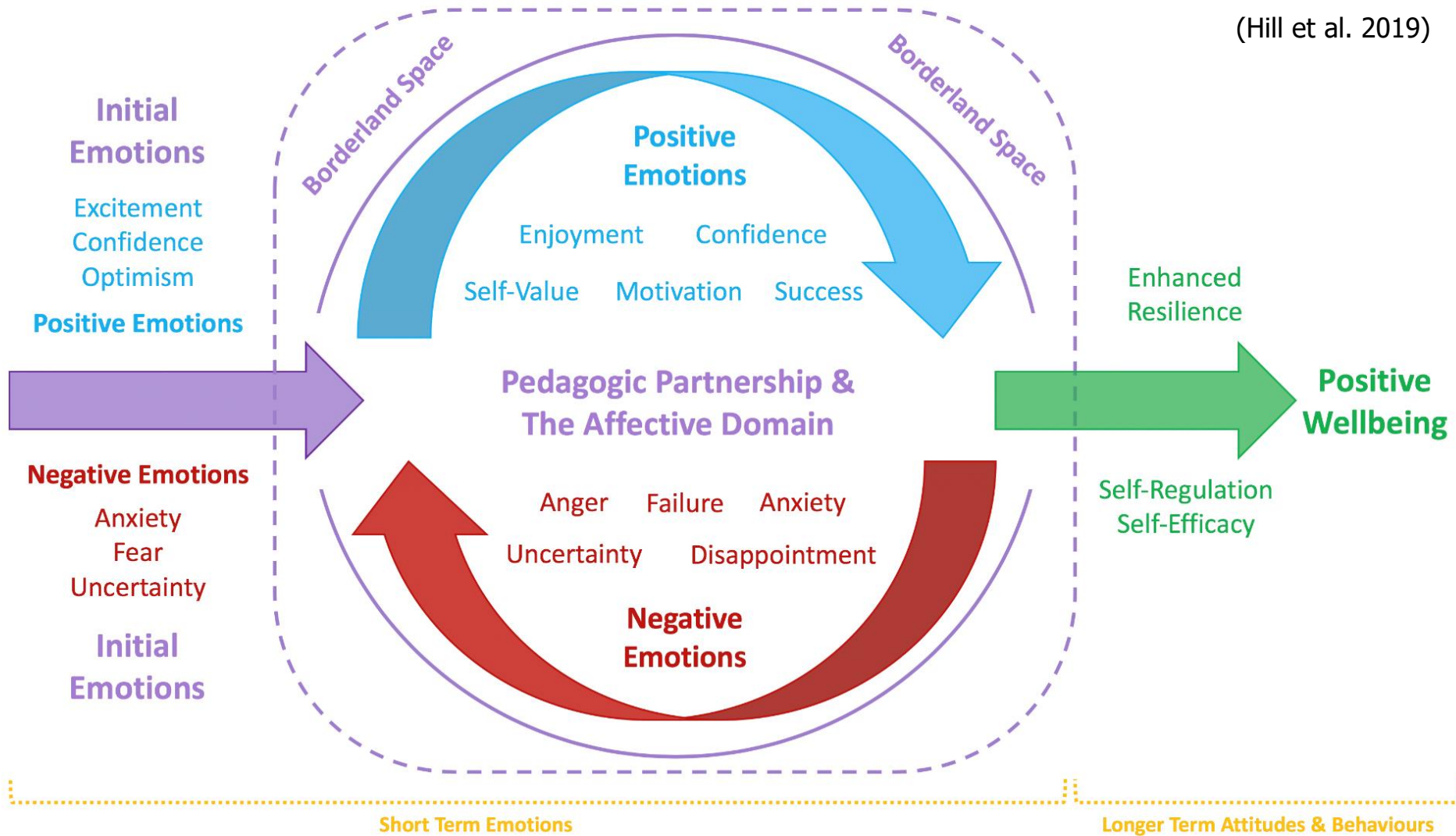
*'Generic comments can be good ... but you never know whether they are applicable to you or not. So **getting personalised feedback is really useful**'*

- Students reported altered behaviour post-meeting, within-task and with respect to other second year work:

*'It's **altered the way I approach other modules**, like essay plans for exams'*

- In third year, students self-avowed to increased self-efficacy, believing more strongly in their capabilities to accomplish assignments:

*'I **definitely had a deeper understanding of the assessment process** – not only planning for and writing an essay but **being able to self-critique** and understand my flaws'*





4. Conclusions

- Faculty should not divorce the affective realm of learning from the cognitive as wellbeing issues rise into sharp focus in HE
- Consciously uniting these two realms allows learning to be tackled holistically, supporting students to develop positive emotions and resilient academic behaviours through meaningful partnership interactions
- We can use partnership to positively harness the central role of emotions in the teaching and learning process

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Thank you for listening

Questions?



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