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7 June 2018

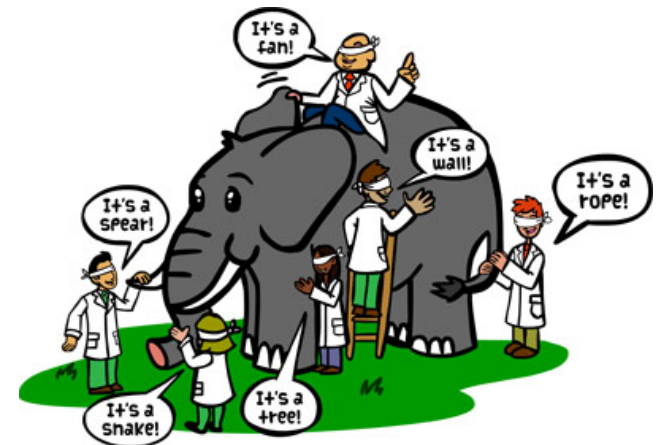
# Building Learning Communities to Enhance Assessment



Image courtesy of Advance HE

# Session outline

1. Context
2. What is the purpose of assessment & feedback in HE?
3. Reconsidering assessment and feedback in HE
4. Improving your assessment literacy and that of your students through learning communities
5. Programme focussed assessment to enhance practice
6. Overall implications for practice



# 1. Context

- assessment and feedback are arguably more influential to the learner experience than teaching (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

*But ...*

- they receive consistently low satisfaction scores in national student surveys around the world (Nicol, 2010; Yang & Carless, 2013)
- assessment standards are being challenged across the sector

# Breakout activity 1

**What is the purpose of assessment & feedback in HE?**



- share some examples with us

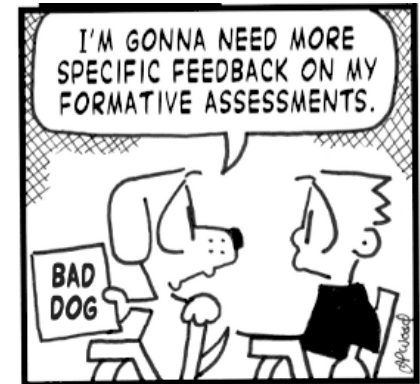
**(5 minutes)**

# 2. Assessment and feedback purpose

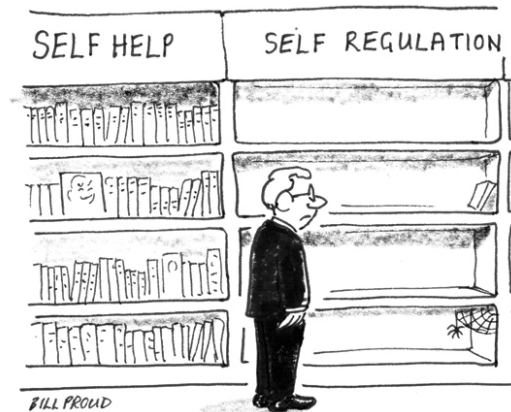
a) Assessment **OF** learning  
(to demonstrate achievement)



b) Assessment **FOR** Learning  
(to give feedback on L & T)



c) Assessment **AS** Learning  
(to self-regulate)



# Breakout activity 2

**What key issues are you grappling with re A & F?**



- share some examples with us

**(5 minutes)**

# 3. Re-considering A & F

- What key issues is the sector grappling with re A & F?

## **Authentic assessment**

- Real world, live projects
- Co-production

## **Inclusive assessment**

- Student-centred learner analytics / dashboards
- PLEs

## **Building assessment self-regulation**

- Reflective practition & responsibility
- Lifelong learning

## **Grade inflation**

- Calibrating standards

## **Building self-efficacy**

- Positive mental wellbeing



- we challenge you to ...
- reimagine assessment and feedback ...
- to promote the knowledge and skills (**graduate attributes**) needed for academic success and twenty-first century careers

*Whilst ...*



- enhancing NSS and TEF metrics

# 4. Improving assessment literacy

## Dialogic feed forward assessment

- involve students in dialogic assessment activities
- students use feedback from peers or themselves as part of an ongoing process of developing *self-regulation* (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006)
- any assessment that does not build students' capacity to effectively judge their work is unsustainable (Boud & Malloy, 2013)

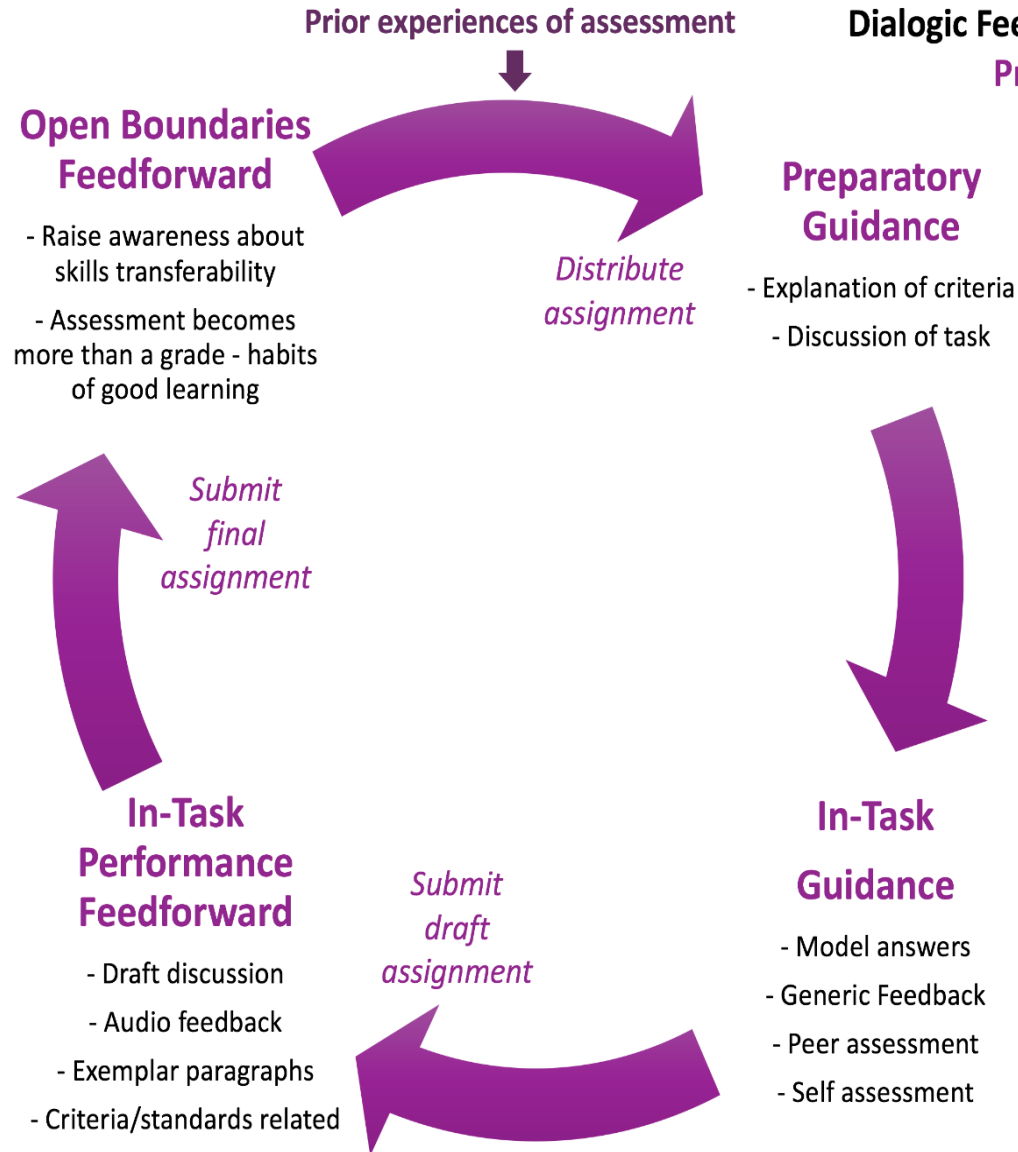
see Oxford Brookes ASKe leaflet



[leaflet](#)

# Example dialogic feedforward in a FET module at UWE

- Proactive reciprocity (Winstone, 2017).
  - Motivation/self-efficacy (Ritchie, 2016).
  - Self-regulation (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006; Nicol, 2010).
  - Emotional risk/resilience (Barnett, 2007).
- 
- Students engage early with task & generate personal understanding via dialogue – take ownership (Carless, 2006).
  - Students understand standards as interpreted by tutor (Carless, 2006).
  - Students can ‘make good’ – motivated to close performance gap and knowing how to get there (Blair & McGinty, 2013).
  - Affective spaces: ‘head on learning’, anxiety but caring and personalized (Yang & Carless, 2013).



## Dialogic Feedforward Assessment Cycle Process & Principles

- Tutor introduces task goals, criteria and standards (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006).
- Tutor clarifies task goals, criteria and standards (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006).
- Peer discussion of criteria and standards (Liu & Carless, 2006).
- Students judge their own work developing in-task assessment literacy (Price *et al.*, 2010).

# Selected results

- conversation compels 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’ R7***

*‘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’ R9***

- **task-specific behaviour** ... and **self-regulation**

*‘it helped me to **realise how to critique my own essays** because I was able to sit down with you and go through the essay and know exactly why you were commenting on something ... **It allows me now to see in other essays the same things I’m doing**’ R10*

*‘Now, I feel like **I can evaluate at different stages throughout assessment and therefore make changes.** Before, I just **skimmed over work**, handed it in, and got feedback at the end **without really thinking about it**’ R29*

- **Self-efficacy** - students display stronger beliefs in their capabilities to accomplish tasks in future
- Altered their **learning behaviour**:

*‘I’ve altered the way I approach other modules ... like preparing essay plans for exams ... when I was doing my plans I said ok that needs more, that needs a reference, because I had thought about it for the Ecology essay’ R28*

## Enhanced NSS / TEF metrics

- all students rated the module as giving them high quality feedback: detailed, conversational, personalised, timely, multi-faceted

# Enhanced performance

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



| 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            |



Dialogic  
assessment

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

\* Did not have a  
meeting

Current research: dialogic spaces to consciously *encounter emotion*  
and *enhance positive mental wellbeing*

## 5. Programme focussed assessment

- assessment of student learning specifically designed to address key programme learning outcomes
- enables:
  - a) a planned and coordinated approach to the design and inclusion of assessments across a programme
  - b) an appropriate range of assessments ‘of’, ‘for’ and ‘as’ learning
  - c) evaluation of assessments in an integrated and longitudinally oriented manner
  - d) collaboration between various contributors to the programme
- builds learning communities - allows assessment calibration



# Integrated Programme Assessment at Brunel

- decoupled assessment from modules
- formative work supports fewer summative assessments

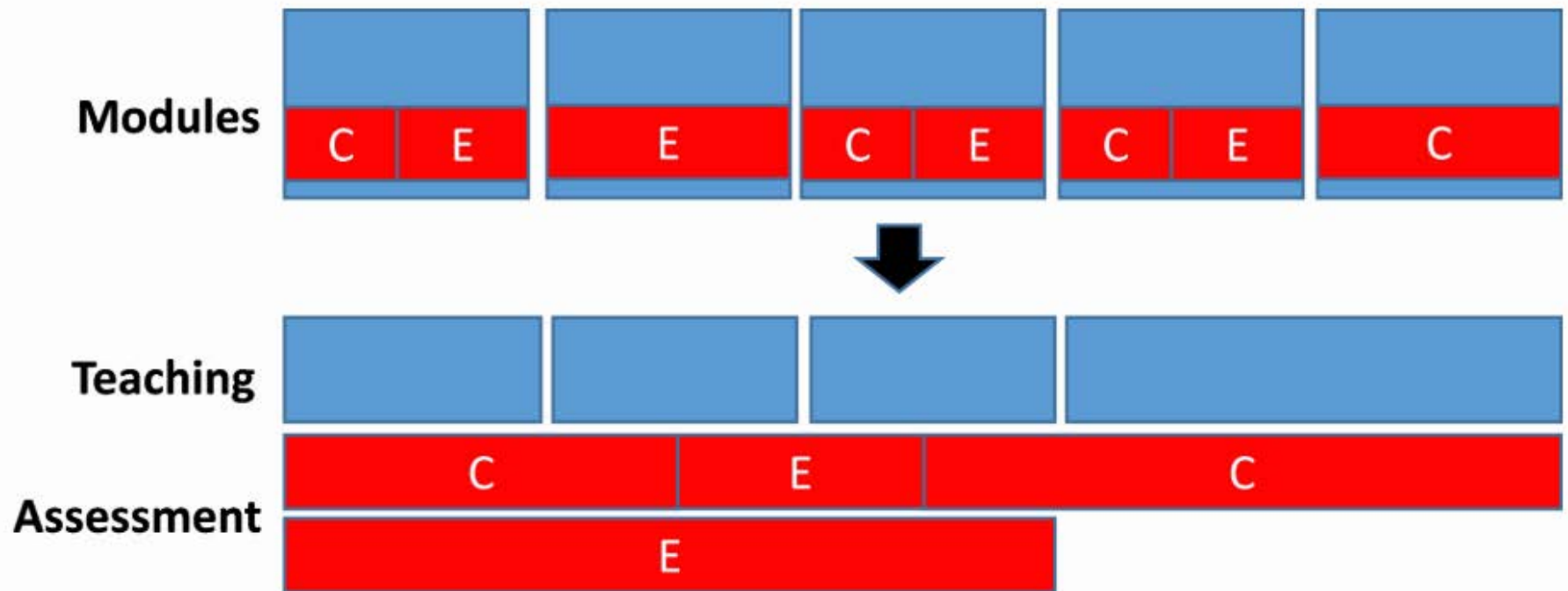
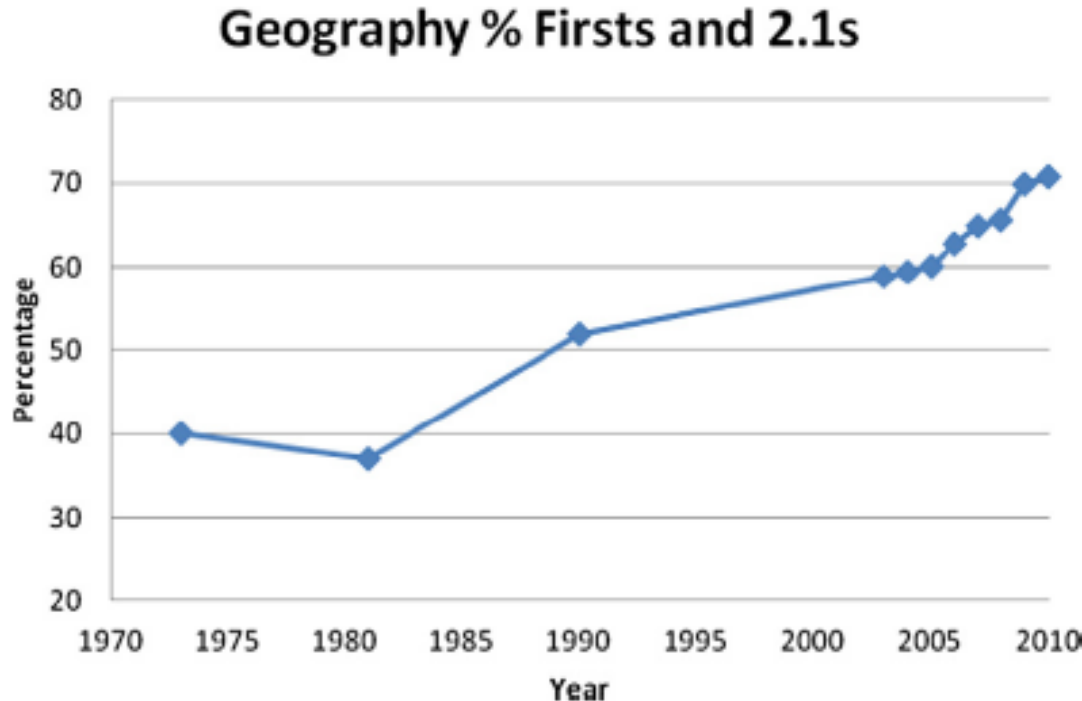


Figure 1: Schematic representation of restructuring Coursework (C) and exams (E).

# Why do we need to calibrate assessment judgement?

- Gov. introduced the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in 2016 to recognise and reward excellent teaching in UK
- DfE introduced a grade inflation metric to the TEF in September 2017:  
  
*‘Assessors should not consider the proportion of 2:1s and firsts to provide evidence as to the quality of teaching’*
- Why? Because the profile of UK degree outcomes has shown considerable upward drift over recent decades

- percentage 'good' geography degrees in UK risen from 40% in early 1970s to 71% in 2010 and 80% in 2016



(Source: Thornes, 2012 and RGS unpublished)

**Figure 1** Average percentage of good geography degrees 1973–2010  
*Source: Chapman (1994) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (2010)*

- assessors must understand and consistently apply academic standards to ensure comparability of outcomes

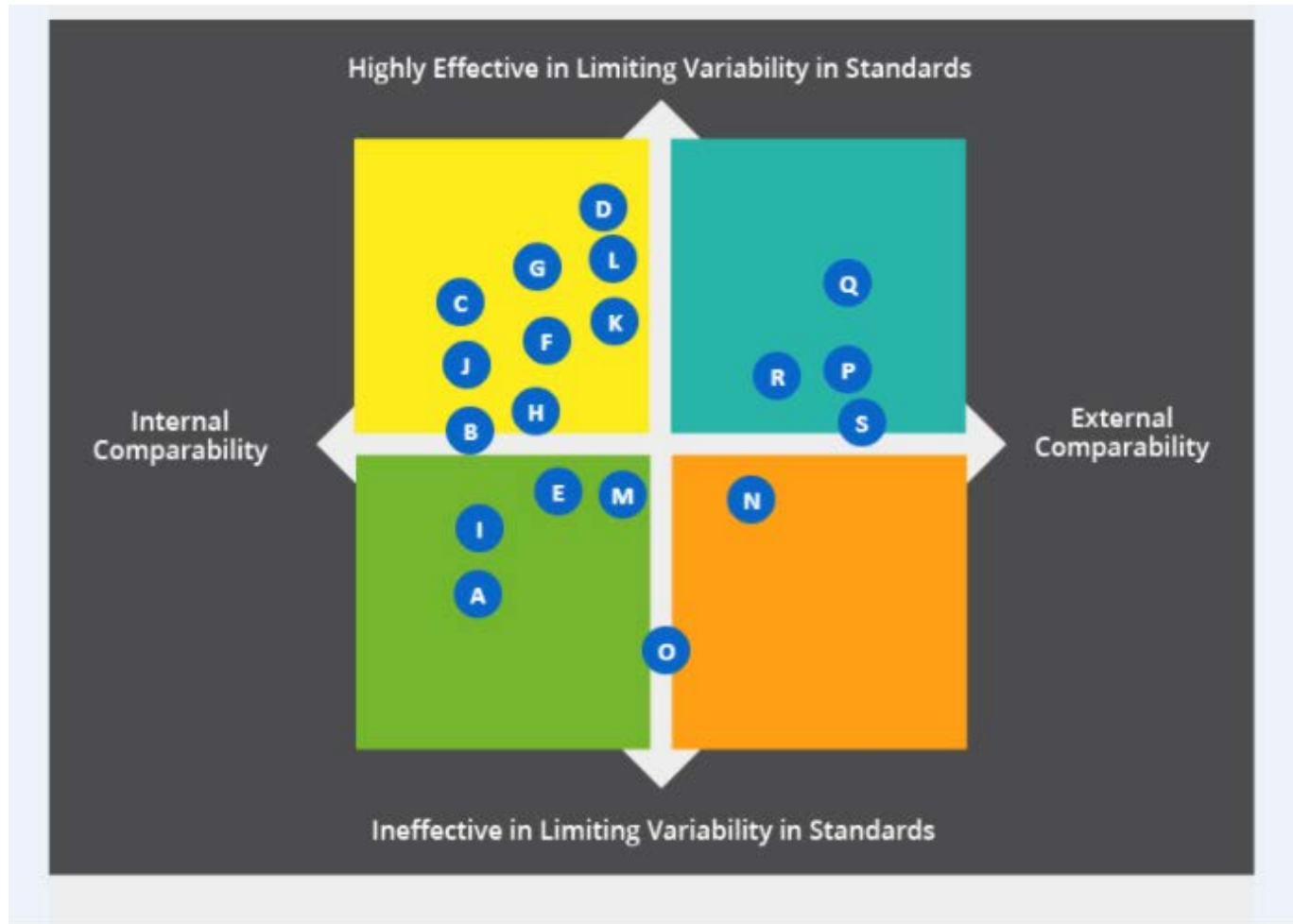
# Breakout activity 3

Approaches to reduce variation in judging academic standards

1. Peer scrutiny of module assessment
2. Pre-teaching briefing to module team on assessment expectations
3. Pre-teaching module team exercises to mark and discuss exemplar assignments
4. Use of a detailed marking scheme
5. Blind double-marking of work, resolving differences by discussion
6. Moderation by comparing averages and distribution of marks given by each marker in the team
7. External examining
8. Markers having experience as external examiners
9. Markers being members of a learned society or professional body
10. Markers being familiar with national reference points

**Which are the best activities to assure standards & why?**

# One example from an experienced HE academic ...



## Ineffective (?):

- A = Peer scrutiny of module assessment
- E = Second marking of all work
- I = Use of a detailed marking scheme
- M = Moderation by comparing staff marks

## Effective (?):

- P = External examining
- Q = Markers have externally examined
- R = Markers are members of a learned society
- S = Markers familiar with national benchmarks

## 6. Implications for practice

To rise to the challenges of A & F in future, we could:

1. Work actively in programme and/or department teams, reaching out to disciplinary communities of practice
2. Deliver curricula with coherent assessment objectives and standardised grading schemes to facilitate developmental feed-forward
3. Undertake calibration activities in programme teams to help staff gain shared understanding of different levels of work
4. Deliver more feedback before formal grading, meeting with students or establishing peer feedback
5. Use assessment dialogue to support positive mental wellbeing

# Any questions?



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