Effecting Sustainable Change in Assessment Practice and Experience – the ESCAPE project

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Assessment-For-Learning; design themes.
The significant influence of assessment on student study behaviours, their approach to learning and ultimately student learning is a recurrent theme in the educational literature (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 1994; Rowntree, 1977; Snyder, 1970).

It will be of little surprise that the literature includes numerous suggestions, guidance, principles or conditions of assessment that are likely to support learning. What follows is a synthesis of some of the guidance into a manageable collection.

The work specially draws on
- Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004)
- Principles of good assessment and feedback practice (Nicol, 2007)
- Principles of effective assessment (NUS)
- Assessment Standards Manifesto (Weston-Manor-Group, 2007)

What follows is a synthesis of the principles & conditions, etc. into a set of short themes. The questions are taken direct from the principles & conditions etc.

The ESCAPE themes…

Good Assessment for Learning …
- Engages students with the assessment criteria
- Supports personalised learning
- Ensures feedback leads to improvement
- Focuses on student development
- Stimulates dialogue
- Considers student and staff effort
Good Practice in Assessment-For-Learning: Engages students with the assessment criteria

Assessment is an important aspect of student learning and should be used to help shape students understanding of standards and the assessment criteria. Our interactions with students, through assessment and feedback, should help students engage with the assessment criteria.

Q1.1. I communicate clear and high expectations
Q1.2. My assessment is aligned to the learning outcomes
Q1.3. I produce assessment criteria that helps to clarifies what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards)
Q1.4. I give feedback that is linked to the assessment criteria / expected outcomes
Q1.5. I ensure that my assessment is reliable, valid, fair and consistent

Notes
Good Practice in Assessment-*For*-Learning: Supports personalised learning

Students have their own motivations and interests. As individuals, students also have differing needs to support their learning. Whilst individual assessment tasks are likely to be impractical proposition it is helpful to consider how assessment can support the personalisation of learning.

Q2.1. I provide a range of assessment to ensure inclusivity

Q2.2. My assessments have the capacity to inspire and motivate my students

Q2.3. I ensure that students have choice in the topic, method, criteria, weighting or timing of assessments

Q2.4. I involve students in decision making about assessment and practice

Q2.5. I ask students to help design the feedback they would like when they make an assignment submission

Notes
Good Practice in Assessment-For-Learning: Ensures feedback leads to improvement

Feedback is an essential aspect of assessment activity. Feedback will be more effective if it is prompt and makes sense to the students. Moreover, good feedback provides a commentary on the students’ submissions, offers advice on how the work could be developed and provides opportunities for students to demonstrably engage with the feedback.

Q3.1. I ensure that my feedback is produced quickly enough to be of use to students

Q3.2. I provide feedback that is detailed and frequent

Q3.3. I ensure that the feedback makes sense to students

Q3.4. I ensure that my students have the opportunity to act on the feedback

Q3.5. I deliver high quality feedback information related to the assessment criteria that helps learners self-correct

Notes
Good Practice in Assessment-For-Learning: Focuses on student development

Assessment has a significant influence on student motivation and the ways in which students approach their learning. Good assessment develops the students’ interests, motivations and encourages appropriate study behaviours. Ultimately good assessment motivates good learning.

Q4.1. I design assessment that focuses on learning rather than the marks

Q4.2. I ensure that summative assessment has a positive effect on learning

Q4.3. The assessment and feedback activity encourages an appropriate approach to learning (i.e. deep not surface, understanding not memory)

Q4.4. I facilitate the development of self assessment and reflection on learning

Q4.5. My assessment encourages motivational beliefs and self esteem in my students

Notes
**Good Practice in Assessment-For-Learning: Stimulates dialogue**

A good learning environment considers the individual student whilst also recognising the importance of a *learning community*. Further, learning is enhanced if students are able to share their conceptions and misconceptions. Good assessments support the development of a learning community and provide opportunities for students to engage in a dialogue about their learning.

Teachers too should have an opportunity to engage in a dialogue. A dialogue that helps them shape their teaching and engage in staff, module and programme development activity.

Q5.1. The assessment activity supports the development of learning groups and communities

Q5.2. The assessment activity encourages interaction and dialogue around learning (peer and teacher)

Q5.3. The assessment activity provides opportunities for students to develop their own internalised conceptions of standards and monitor and supervise their own learning

Q5.4. The assessment activity provides information to me to help me shape my teaching

Q5. I feel that my assessment and feedback strategies are central to my staff development and are frequently reviewed

**Notes**
Good Practice in Assessment-For-Learning: Considers student and staff effort

Good assessments create a good educational experience. Good assessment set out high expectations, foster appropriate study behaviours and stimulate students' inquisitiveness, motivation and interest. Good assessment should distribute the students' effort across the study-period and topic areas. Good assessments will demand an appropriate amount of student effort. Good assessments will not, however, overload students nor their teachers. Good assessments ensure there is adequate time for teachers to create and deliver feedback in ways that supports student learning.

Q6.1. I ensure that the assessment captures enough study time (in and out of class)

Q6.2. I ensure that the assessment activities are spread out evenly across timeline of study

Q6.3. I encourage time and effort on challenging learning tasks

Q6.4. I set assessments that are manageable for students and the teaching team

Q6.5. The assessment activity enables me to provide feedback that is prompt, sufficient and supports learning

Notes
References

Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching For Quality Learning At University* (2nd ed.): The society for research into higher education.


