## Assessment and Feedback for the Curriculum Innovation Project Part 1: Educational Issues

This is the first of two videos that are intended to inform your thinking about the assessment and feedback activities that will form an important part of your CIP modules. This one focuses on educational issues while the other outlines the learning technologies that are available.

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Let’s start by looking at the criteria for CIP modules, two of which are especially applicable to assessment and feedback.

Students who have opted to take these modules will expect the assessment to be innovative in some way, so **only** having an end-of-module written examination is likely to disappointment them.

On the other hand, there are alternative ways of getting them to produce written work that they **would** feel were innovative and challenging, and I’ll describe some of these later in this video.

These modules are also intended to develop their graduate attributes, as described in the Graduate Attribute Framework and listed on the next slide.

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Your assessment activities should give your students an opportunity to show that they are developing these attributes.

For example, if you will be assessing the outcomes of a group project in which students collaborate to research a topic and present their analysis, then the assessment criteria could clearly be based around many of these attributes.

This is a significant shift away from most conventional assessments, where the focus is almost entirely on the Research and Academic attributes.

If you are unfamiliar with the detail of the framework, please make sure you read it before planning your assessments.

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When I was looking through the CIP documentation, two phrases caught my eye.

The first emphasises the role of students as participants; in other words they should be actively engaged in exploring, evaluating and expressing information about the module’s topic, not just listening to lectures.

The second talks about the importance of getting the students to reflect on their learning; so part of the assessment should do this and explicitly require them to discuss how their engagement with the module’s activities has developed their graduate attributes.

This kind of reflective practice may be new to students in disciplines such as engineering and the hard sciences, so tutors must ensure that suitable support and guidance is provided.

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One of the challenges faced by the new CIP modules is the need to provide multiple opportunities for personalised feedback to potentially large cohorts of students. One solution that I would encourage you to consider is to make use of self and peer assessment, and for positive educational reasons rather than workload-related ones. There have been several UK HE projects which have explored the benefits of peer assessment, and in my opinion their findings strongly suggest that it should be a key distinctive feature of all CIP modules.

The next few slides introduce some of the papers that shaped my opinion and I highly recommend you download and read them by following the links given on the last slide.

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The first paper is titled ‘The foundation for graduate attributes: developing self-regulation through self and peer-assessment’ by Professor David Nicol, which I feel speaks directly to the central concerns and criteria of the Curriculum Innovation Project, and in particular the use of innovative assessment methods to develop graduate attributes.

It argues that the underpinning requirement for all attribute development is the students' ability to evaluate critically the quality and impact of their own work. It goes on to identify some high-level assessment and feedback activities that help foster critical evaluation, and highlights the benefits of this approach in terms of practicality, efficiency, transferability and the disciplinary embedding of attributes.

I hope that the paper will persuade you to review the assessment activities in your module proposals and look for opportunities to embed self and peer assessment.

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The second paper is again from the Enhancement Themes website. It discusses the need to balance summative ‘Assessment ***of*** learning’ and formative ‘Assessment ***for*** learning’ and analyses the problems that can arise if imbalances occur. Most usefully, it presents four strategies for rebalancing assessment and illustrates these with a selection of brief case studies.

Perhaps the ideas presented will inspire you to think about how self and peer assessment can be used to build rich feedback processes into your module.

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It is crucial that students taking the CIP modules have multiple opportunities for feedback throughout the course, especially as they will probably be working outside of their normal discipline boundaries.

In the third paper I recommend, Professor David Nicol summarises ‘*Four recent papers on assessment and feedback with significant implications for practice*’; one key idea is that “Feedback is a dialogue that students have with their tutors, fellow students and others about their work.”

Finally, a guide by the Higher Education Academy on *Enhancing student learning through effective formative feedback*  includes plenty of good practical advice based around seven principles and eight case-studies. Take a moment now to read through the seven principles on screen.

(wait and read)

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At the start of this talk, I said that there were alternative ways for students to produce written work that can be assessed. The traditional format is the individual essay, where the only feedback students get is from the tutor on the finished product. Students do not usually get to see each other’s essays, so there is no opportunity to learn from their peers either.

You might get students to post messages on a discussion forum, sharing their thinking on the current topic or resources they have found. You can split your students into groups, each with their own discussion forum – this helps ensure that the number of messages is manageable and encourages all students to contribute.

Assessment of these messages can take many forms. For example, you could set a requirement that every student posts at least one significant message each week, and responds to at least two others. It’s up to you to define the criteria for significance.

Alternatively, you could ask students can take it in turn to summarise that week’s debate, and then grade that contribution. Or perhaps your students could use their three best messages as the basis for a short individual essay, so they have already done much of the writing and have received comments on it.

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Blogs are an alternative to discussion boards that students may find easier to use, since all the messages are in date order with the newest at the top. It is thus much more like the social networking sites that they are familiar with.

Again, you can provide smaller groups of students with their own blog, and all the techniques suggested for discussion forums will work with this.

You can also create a personal blog for each student that they can use as a learning journal. They can use this as a planning tool for a final essay – and get feedback from you or their peers – and as a resource to help them write that essay. In other words they can gather and comment on resources, and do some ‘thinking in public’.

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Finally, wikis are simple websites that can be created and edited by a group of students. They can be used by the group to plan a project, collate ideas, information and resources, and even collaboratively write, review and amend the final output. Individual members of the group can have their own page to record their contributions to the project and their reflections on the process, and these could be used as part of the assessment.

It is likely that the group will want to have some face-to-face meetings since they are the most effective means of discussing ideas and making decisions, but a lot of the actual work can take place online in the wiki, where everyone can see it.

You would provide a grade for the final product – typically a report or summary overview of a topic. There are peer-review systems available that enable each student to evaluate their own performance as well as that of the other group members, and you can use the scores generated to modify the group’s grade depending on the input and effort of each individual student. For example, students who the group feel have made key contributions will score a few points more, while anyone seen as a slacker will lose points.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss any of these learning technologies or approaches in more detail. Thanks for watching.

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<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/passport/Graduate_Attributes.html>

<http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/G21C/Assessment_150910.pdf>

[http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/IntegrativeAssessment/  
IA Balancing assessment.pdf](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/IntegrativeAssessment/IA%20Balancing%20assessment.pdf)

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