

THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

A moving target: Assessing the process and progress of learning

Assessment practices in HE remain skewed towards the assessment of learning (Race, 2008) resulting in practices that tend not to equip students well for the processes of effective learning in a learning society (Boud, 2000). The importance of assessment for learning, driven by good feedback processes, is extensively argued (Hounsell, 2008; Molloy and Boud, 2013, Nicol, 2013 et al) as is the need to develop in learners the ability to make evaluative judgments about their own performance (Cowan, 2010).

This session considers these assessment issues through the lens of professional degree routes, where reflecting upon learning is an authentic assessment choice within the curriculum, as well as a programme and professional requirement. Teachers and students are typically joined by external mentors, assessors and supervisors as part of an authentic assessment process, exacerbating the normal assessment challenges of validity, reliability and transparency. This transactional complexity is further compounded by an educational desire to observe, support and verify the developmental journey of the learner: ipsative assessment designed to motivate users through marking progress (Hughes, 2014)

The session opens with a presentation from Yangama Jokwiro (La Trobe) discussing the application of a personal learning space based e-clinical tool which accommodates deliberate practice and mastery of learning in the training of undergraduate nurses. The core principles of these educational practices are repetition of task, multiple assessments, timely feedback and the ability to demonstrate improvement over time. Yangama will relate how the requirements of the National Competency Assessment Schedule have directly led to the development of an e-clinical tool which allows multiple assessors to track students' progress by 'peering into the past' and accommodates ipsative assessment.

Kath Fisher (Southern Cross University) will consider the role of prompting and dialogue in promoting critically reflective capacities. Kath's students are professional school teachers and principals undertaking a postgraduate qualification where reflective practice is not only a key learning outcome, but is also an essential underpinning requirement of their professional

accreditation standards. Nevertheless, reflection remains a complex and demanding endeavour and does not necessarily come naturally to education professionals. Kath will discuss how she provides the scaffolding for the development of these professionals' capacity for critical reflection through formative and summative feedback in the context of developing an ePortfolio for professional accreditation.

Today's educators are challenged to design, manage and evaluate student learning to meet workplace demands for well-rounded graduates with both 'soft' skills and attributes in addition to threshold disciplinary knowledge and competency. This transformative process takes time to mature supporting the idea of establishing foundations in the first year student experience. Christine Slade (University of the Sunshine Coast) considers this initial process of linking critical thinking and reflective practice with a collection of professional evidence. Based on collaborative work with colleague, Terri Downer, Christine offers an example of how these elements converge through a portfolio-based fieldwork assessment task in Midwifery. Through this innovative approach to using contemporary technology this reflective practice model enables students to be assessed on underpinning skills of reflection. Reflective practice is a conscious analysis of decision-making which draws on theory in relation to practice. This provides foundational links between clinical practice, personal development and theoretical knowledge and is therefore essential for the development of life-long learning habits.

The project team from Edith Cowan University (ECU), Richard Bostwick, Mike Monisse-Redman, Michael Finn and Jacqui Patten will focus on how assessment metrics can be used. These metrics will assure the quality and reliability of complex workplace clinical assessments and workforce skills that rely on assessment, both internally and externally. The context for these assessments is both the observation of clinical practice skills, recorded by the employee/lifelong learner on reflective templates alongside evidence of contemporary learning. These need both verification digitally in the workplace and collation in portfolio form as evidence of skill and learning acquisition. The ECU team will discuss how the process they have developed within an industry setting places the employee/lifelong learner firmly in charge of their assessment and learning journey. They will consider the challenges of monitoring and reporting on an individual's progress through tools and techniques developed specifically for complex distributed assessment as well the development of reporting mechanisms to ensure corporate governance.

The final session is presented by Shane Sutherland (PebblePad) but draws upon assessment practice from the University of Edinburgh. Here learners are led to reflect deeply on their development over time, and to plan for future progress. The development practices developed as part of the Unfold Project at Edinburgh utilize cleverly designed templates to act as 'proxy' tutors in an essentially dialogic process. Shane will go on to discuss how tutors use assessment features such as assessment pausing, releasing feedback prior to grades, requiring feedback request forms and digital scorecards to support, guide and engage all stakeholders in the assessment process.

This proposal is for a 50 minute session. The complexity of the assessment issues and ingenuity of the solutions requires sufficient time for each member of this community proposal to present their work. That these challenges will be familiar to all HE institutions v

 Follow

professional programmes, irrespective of the platforms in use, warrants a session that provides adequate opportunity for all attendees to fully explore the issues through structured learning activities leading to a panel discussion. With that in mind we plan a short snowballing activity; leading to the categorization of the challenges of assessing the process and progress of learning in highly distributed contexts which rely on the quality of judgment of externals and learners not formally training in the art and science of assessment; concluding with panel responses and facilitated discussion.

Shane Sutherland¹, Yangama Jokwiro², Kath Fisher³, Christine Slade⁴, Terri Downer⁴, Richard Bostwick⁵, Michael Monisse-Redman⁵, Michael Finn⁵, Jacqueline Patten⁵ and Alison Poot¹

¹Pebble Learning, ²La Trobe University, ³Southern Cross University, ⁴University of the Sunshine Coast and ⁵Edith Cowan

SHARE THIS:



Loading...

