Principle 12:
Making assessment enjoyable for you and the students

What the principle means

It can seem counter-intuitive to seek joyousness in assessment for students or assessors, but students who are deeply engaged in authentic activities can on occasions describe them as the most productive parts of their time at university. For assessors too, seeing our teaching efforts rewarded by students' production of good or excellent quality work can be among the most satisfying aspects of our role, particularly when students who struggled at the outset achieve the qualifications for which they have worked so hard.

Questions to consider with your course team and students

- Are any of your assessment activities likely to make students say, 'That looks like a really interesting thing to do. I can't wait to start!', for example, see Radclyfe Thomas, N. (2012).
- When you are marking work, do any of the assignments make you feel happy that students are demonstrating genuine commitment, creativity and engagement?
- Can you map where your hard-won efforts supporting struggling students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been rewarded by successful graduation of students who felt at times destined to fail?

Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 12, as a team can you identify areas that you know to be priorities for enhancing your programme assessment and feedback strategy in the coming three years? All areas are important, but selecting too many can make genuine actionable proposals unachievable which is demoralising. Concentrate on what is feasible.

Once you have agreed on the priorities, you may wish to use the table overleaf to record your plans for enhancement under Principle 12.

Principle 12 worksheet - Making assessment enjoyable for you and the students

| Principle focus	Specific actions you will take:	Responsible leader:	Help/resources needed to make this happen:	Milestones (timescale for implementation):	Performance indicators:
e.g. Exploring student choice in assessment	e.g. Consultation with staff and students about the assessments they have found most meaningful and most enjoyable	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. Time to work as a department team and with students.	e.g. One academic year	e.g. • Records of discussions • Shared findings of learning captured in the discussion. • Guidelines for staff around the inclusion of greater choice, towards joy, in assessment.

About this resource

This resource is drawn from the *Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design* (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 12– Making assessment enjoyable for you and the students'. The resource can be used by teams who wish to review how this principle is enacted in their work, and who wish to plan to enhance their practice regarding this principle. The resource can used as a stand-alone thinking and planning tool for teams, as well as being considered in the context of the toolkit as a whole.

As part of the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' project, Professor Sally Brown and Professor Kay Sambell designed a toolkit for effective assessment design. This toolkit has been designed to provide course teams at Maynooth University with guidance on periodical review of their assessment and feedback practices, in support of student success. The toolkit involves twelve principles which were proposed by Brown and Sambell, and shaped and modified by the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Advisory Group. The toolkit is available at in the Maynooth University Assess for Success Hub.

The principles and the toolkit taken as a whole set a substantial agenda for action, but Brown and Sambell stress that the toolkit can primarily help local teams to set short- and longer-term prioritised targets to enhance assessment by focusing on activities that would help to ensure that assessment tasks, assignments and feedback could fully contribute to student engagement and positive outcomes.

References:

Radclyffe-Thomas, N. (2012) 'Blogging is addictive' in Wankel, C and Blessinger, P (eds) *Increasing Student Engagement and Retention using Online Learning Activities: Wikis, Blogs and Webquests, Cutting-edge Technologies in Higher Education*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
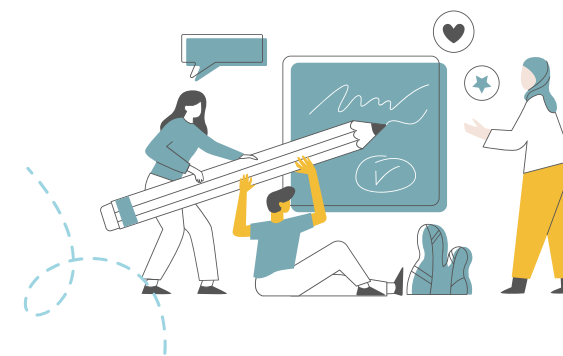
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