Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
Blended Learning Seminar Series for QA Practitioners
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Aligning Assessment, Learning and Teaching for Quality Assurance in Further and Higher Education Contexts

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Three Guiding Questions

- What does alignment mean in the context of Assessment, Learning and Teaching?

- Why does alignment matter? Why is it important?

- What challenges does alignment present for colleagues involved in programme/module design and/or quality assurance-based work?

A *Wise Man* once said…

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes determining the proper questions to ask."

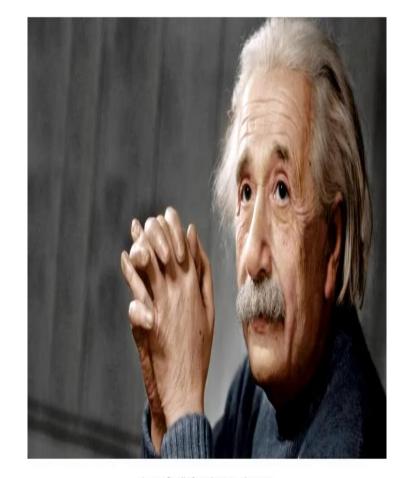*****So… what are your pressing questions/issues/concerns in relation to this topic?**

Image Credit: fromthegrapevine.com

Question 1

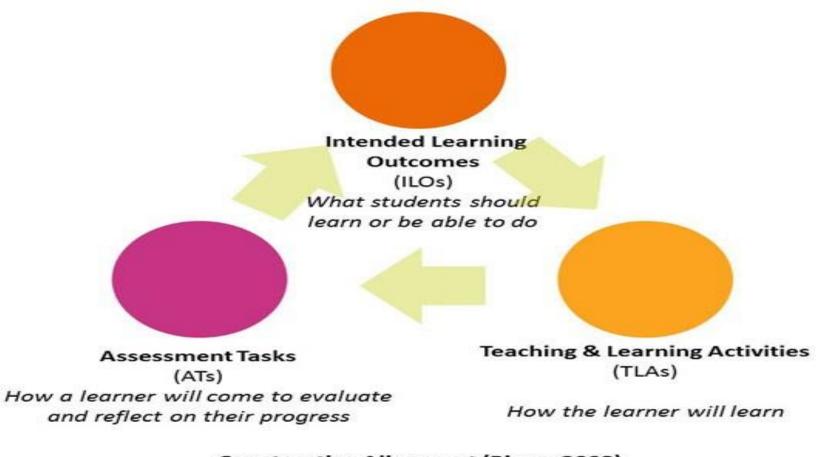**What does *alignment* mean in the context of Assessment, Learning and Teaching?**

A Working Definition

An aligned programme of study is one in which the three core functions of

- o assessment
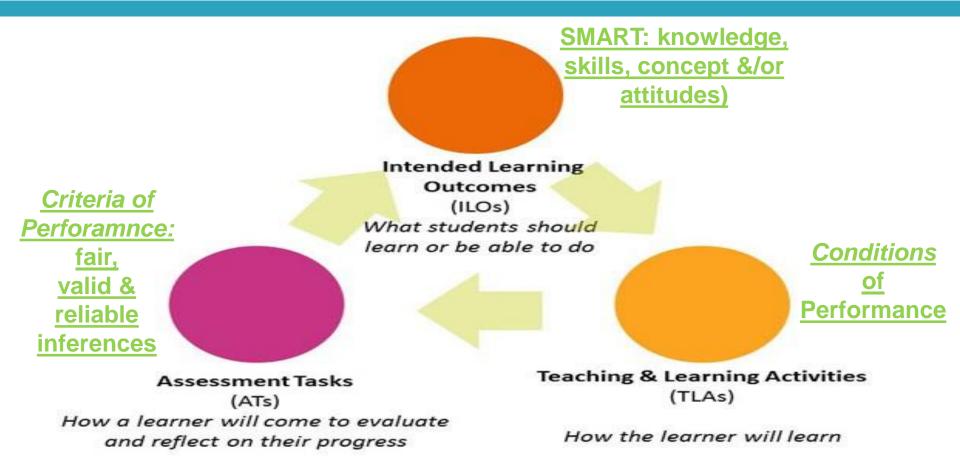- o learning and
- o teaching

are all directed towards the same end (optimising student learning) with each element reinforcing (rather than working at cross-purposes to) the other.

Intended Learning Outcomes
(ILOs)
What students should learn or be able to do

Assessment Tasks
(ATs)
How a learner will come to evaluate and reflect on their progress

Teaching & Learning Activities
(TLAs)
How the learner will learn

Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 2003)

Drilling Down on
the *Process* of Constructive Alignment

SMART: knowledge, skills, concept &/or attitudes)

Intended Learning Outcomes
(ILOs)
What students should learn or be able to do

Criteria of Perforamnce: **fair, valid & reliable inferences**

Conditions of Performance

Assessment Tasks
(ATs)
How a learner will come to evaluate and reflect on their progress

Teaching & Learning Activities
(TLAs)

How the learner will learn

Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 2003)

Instructional Design: A View from the Trenches

 Insider perspective: How do people (we!) plan our modules/programmes (Linear model? Micro/macro perspectives?)

 Challenge: Re-alignment (within modules and across programmes?)

 Your experience: Does this ring true for you?

Question 2

Why does *alignment* matter?

Why is it important?

Three Immediate Benefits

1. Supports the process of developing a shared understanding of valued learning goals and how they can be achieved

2. Helps to deprivatise espoused theories of learning: what/how we teach and what/how/why/when we assess

3. Promotes high standards in assessment, learning and teaching by design .

High Standards in Assessment in HE?
Some Guiding Principals/Checklist

1. Assessments engage students in productive learning
2. Feedback is used to actively improve student learning
3. Students and teachers share responsibility for learning and assessment
4. Students are inducted into the assessment practices and cultures
5. Assessment for learning is central to subject and programme design and is a focus for staff and institutional development
6. Assessment provides inclusive and trustworthy representation of student achievement.

(Adapted from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2010).

Question 3

What challenges does *alignment* present for colleagues involved in

programme/module design

and/or quality assurance-based work?

A Potpourri of Challenges

Mental models of ALT based on *'Apprenticeships of Observation'*

Feedback/ feedforward: timing, nature, source, purpose, use

Alignment at the : modular & programmatic levels

Pressures on depleted/ing resources

Lay theories of what constitutes valid, fair & reliable assessments (e.g., TLC/CGs)

Varying perspectives: Student, Lecturer, Chairs, QA/Externs

Assessment priorities (backwash/overload)

Assessment literacy (professional development)

Moving Forward:
The Assessment Design Framework (ADF)
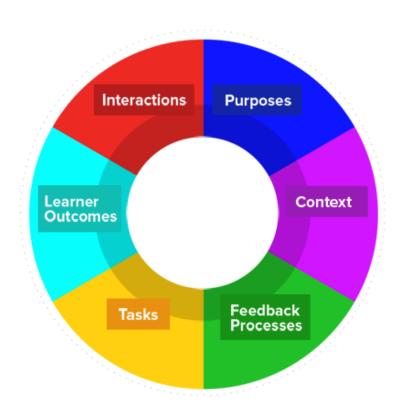

https://www.assessmentdecisions.org/guide/

ADF: 6 Categories of Assessment

Bearman, M., Dawson, P., Boud, D., Hall, M., Bennett, S., Molloy, E., & Joughin, G., (2014), Guide to the Assessment Design Decisions Framework, http://www.assessmentdecisions.org/guide

Assessment: (1/6) Purposes

Purposes

Key considerations

How can assessment:

1. support student learning?
2. generate grades that will form part of subsequent certification
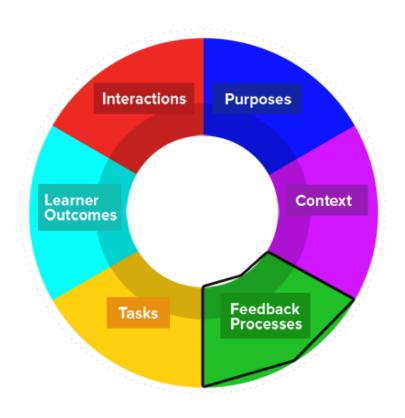3. equip learners in making future judgements?

Context

Key considerations

Which of the following attributes needs to be considered in assessment design? What specifically about each can be taken into account? How can tensions between different needs be reconciled?

- Characteristics of learners/students
- Institutional assessment principles and policies
- Professional, vocational or employment-related requirements
- Departmental, disciplinary and personal norms, expectations and ideas
- The overall program and the role of the unit module
- Learning environment e.g. mode (online/face-to-face/blended); class size

Assessment: (3/6) Feedback

Feedback Processes

Key considerations

- How are multiple feedback opportunities achieved through the distribution and relationship of tasks across the unit/module/overall program?
- What types of feedback information will be provided and by whom?
- How will learner performance be used to influence the (re)design of later tasks?
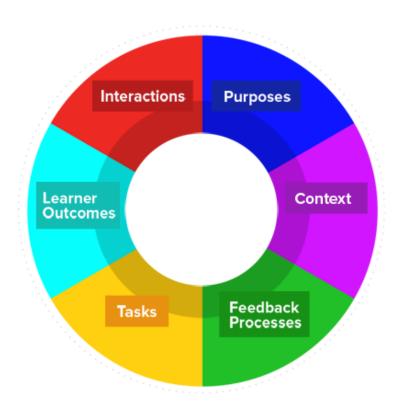
Assessment: (3/6) Tasks

Tasks

Students need to engage with a range of tasks to: (1) develop and (2) demonstrate their learning.

Key considerations

- What is the rationale for each task?
- How do the tasks drive learning? What do the tasks specifically require learners to do?
- How will successful completion be judged?
- How are tasks best distributed across the semester?
- How will students contribute?
- Which tasks will be graded?

Learner Outcomes

Key considerations

How does assessment align with, and promote, desired student outcomes, including:

1. unit/module learning outcomes;
2. overall program learning outcomes;
3. professional requirements; and
4. students' general professional or intellectual development.
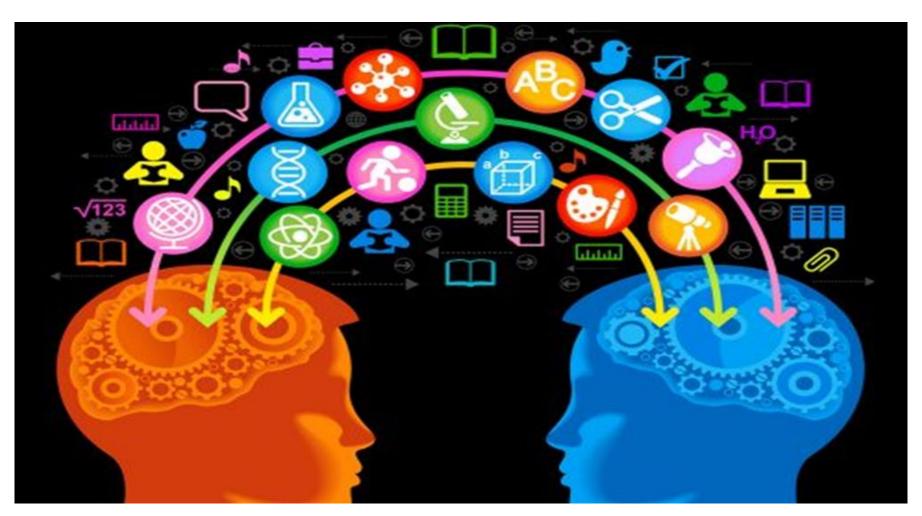
Assessment: (6/6) Interactions

Interactions

Key considerations

- How will resistance or engagement from learners or colleagues influence assessment processes?
- How will learners understand what is required in the assessment task(s)?
- What information will be needed to improve this assessment for subsequent occasions?
- What associated changes in teaching and learning activities will be required?

Key Takeaways?

Thank you!