

ROUNDTABLE: THE CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

World Café Effective Assessment Table 5 Notes Summary

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1. If there was one thing you could change about assessment in higher education, what would it be?

Misconceptions

- Academic freedom misunderstood
- Make assessment not a postscript
- Universities are akin to “consenting [male] adults in private”
- Lecturer autonomy, rather than a team
- Lecturers “imprisoned in [outdated] paradigm”

Practical problems

- Large group classes tend to hold back innovation
- People outside are not involved:
 - Libraries
 - Government
 - Industry groups
- Lack of involvement of students
- Lack of training of teaching staff
- Unit approval procedures — units should not require reapproval for change in assessment

- Not following through outcomes
- Lack of knowledge of “assessment literacy”
- Semesterisation

“The blame game”

- Staff not to blame
- Difficulties at departmental level — level of discipline.

2. How could that change become a reality?

Change who is involved

- Call on help: library; Academic Development Unit

Be more public

- Grading rubrics for feedback (for learning and reliability)
- Marking criteria
- Make furtive activities public

Be more informative

- Exemplars

Be more reliable

- Moderation

Be more engaging with students

- Allow student input at early stage
- More engaging assessment
- More “authentic” assessment
- High impact activities: learning activities; student engagement

Top-down changes (above the level of unit coordinator)

- Structural change
- Policy change
- Sessional staff training
- Reconceptualising the university
- Additional resources
- Mandatory training of all staff
- Budget process to be informed of assessment needs
- Change who is involved
- Academic development
- Subject coordinator support for sessional teachers
- Staff to be prepared to defend assessment results
- Input from other teaching staff
- Assessment to be part of professional development — built into review of academic performance and promotion processes

Changes in attitude

- Assessment is a institutional responsibility
- Valuing by staff; management
- Assessment literacy
- Assessment to be seen as learning process

Dealing with students

- Keep up with changes — students are likely to resist initially some changes.