

# Outside the Box Assessment & Feedback Practices 2015 Volume 1 Number 1

 THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHAMPTON

  
INSTITUTE OF  
LEARNING & TEACHING  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Welcome

The Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT) is excited to launch this first issue of *Outside the Box Assessment and Feedback Practices*.

As a University, we are proud of our mission to **transform lives and inspire change**. Our approach to high-quality, experiential and personalised learning and teaching is a hallmark of this commitment.

Assessment is central to the student experience. Assessment *of* and *for* learning measures students' achievements towards learning outcomes. Assessment provides important developmental opportunities to improve performance through feedback and reflection.

[The University's approach to quality enhancement of learning and teaching](#) recognises the importance of sharing good practice. Through mechanisms, such as *Outside the Box Assessment and Feedback Practices*, we are able to identify excellent ideas in 'niche' areas and transfer them into 'mainstream' use.

If you have an example of assessment or feedback practice that you feel is unusual, flexible, creative, experiential, authentic, applied, exciting, or just plain wonderful, please do let us know. We look forward to featuring your examples in future issues of this publication.

Also, please visit our [Assessment & Feedback Portal](#) for more information about Assessment and Feedback at the University of Northampton. We hope these resources continue to support your work in transforming and inspiring others.

**The Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education**

The University of Northampton

[www.northampton.ac.uk/ilt](http://www.northampton.ac.uk/ilt)

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### Example 1

## Robbery role-play engages Policing students

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The BA in Policing programme uses an extended role play involving a robbery incident. This assessment requires students to deal with an incident from first report through to appearing in court to give evidence. The exercise requires them to devise their own investigative strategy and if they make the right enquiries, they are fed extra snippets of information that should lead to an arrest of the suspect. Students interview the suspect using the tape-recorded interview method and then submit the file to the Crown Prosecution Service for a decision as to whether or not to charge the suspect.

### Example 2

## First year Advertising students deliver live briefs and carry out 'Reportage'

*Kardi Somerfield, Senior Lecturer in Marketing*

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First year BA Advertising are given a live brief to deliver. Last year it was wrapping a taxi - see article here <http://www.northampton.ac.uk/news/advertising-students-take-part-in-a-taxi-wrap-challenge-to-promote-the-university-of-northampton>.

This year they are working on developing a Mascot for the University and using it in a number of promotional situations, such as a Saints game or an awards ceremony. Next year, it will be something different. The main point is that it is real and they have to deliver everything from pitching for funding, through to execution.

I refer to the assessment as 'Reportage'. A group report documents the steps in the process, with an emphasis on the role their team played. Also, this piece of work includes an individual reflection. I'm not sure that it is earth-shattering in terms of process, but it is authentic, very organic (full of challenge and uncertainty) and the student feedback has been very good.

### Example 3

## Using pictures to reinforce learning

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At the end of a session ask students to draw a diagram, graphic organiser, model (you do have to explain these at first) to show their learning: what new knowledge, skills and ways of learning they have developed. Share and discuss models.



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## Example 4

# Student nurses carry out clinical audits

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In the autumn 2012, a local General Hospital approached its local Higher Education Institution (HEI), the University of Northampton (UoN), to propose that pre-registration nursing students become involved in working with its Audit Department. Following extensive discussions and negotiations, it was jointly agreed to 'pilot' an opportunity for two third year adult student nurses to work on a pressure ulcer care audit as part of their third year dissertation. Supported by members of the Audit Department at the local hospital, and supervised by academic tutors with experience in primary research data collection techniques, the specially selected students embarked on a journey which was to revolutionise their own views of audit, as well as demonstrate to both the audit team and academic team the need to develop their own experiences of supporting student nurses who elect to undertake audit work.

Throughout the duration of the 'pilot' project, all parties involved in the process received extensive support from within both organisations. The students were supported in the 'hub' placement learning opportunity by their practice assessor, who had been extensively briefed by the Module Leader (ML) prior to the students' arrival in their designated clinical area. The practice assessors were also in frequent communication with their University Clinical link person throughout the duration of the project. These Academic Links worked with the Practice Assessors to facilitate changes to the students' working shift patterns as required to support the audit process. In addition, regular local meetings were undertaken between the ML and members of the audit department, clinical supervisors, to address concerns and queries as they arose and clarify both the communication mechanisms for the pilot and the academic requirements of the dissertation.

On completion of the project, the students were formally invited to evaluate their unique experience via standard academic reporting mechanisms; and informally invited to meet with the Head of Nursing Developments (HoND) and ML to provide more detailed verbal feedback on the strengths and challenges of the pilot. Having completed the first phase of the audit pilot, the ML and HoND reviewed the project with the aim of identifying both the positive aspects and potential areas for improvement should the project be extended into a second phase with multiple-sites. After successfully completing their undergraduate dissertation and achieving their award, the student participants who participated in the pilot expressed both their satisfaction and enjoyment in being given the opportunity.



### Example 5

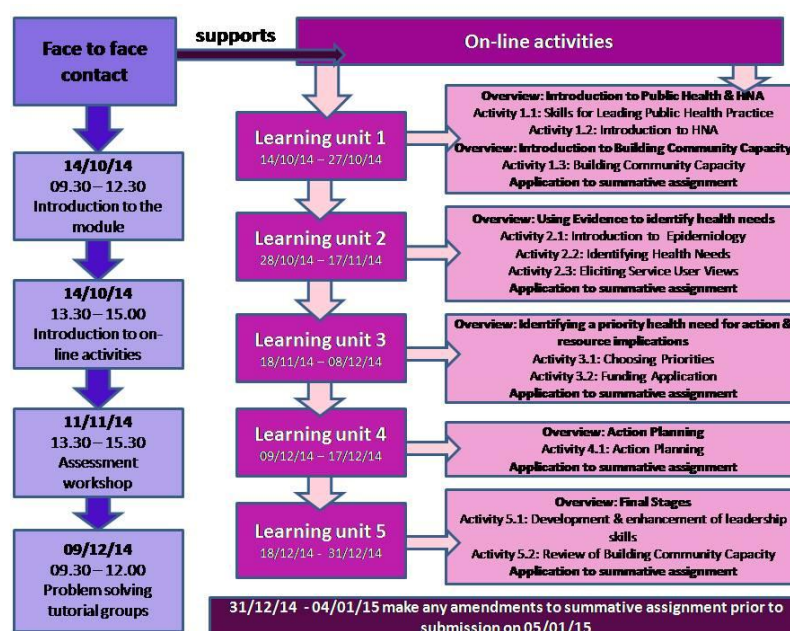
## Assessment maps support blended learning

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Leading Public Health Practice (NURM009) includes learning and teaching activities that are predominantly facilitated via online learning. It was felt that a clear strategy was needed whereby students would be able to identify clearly how the activities and associated feedback can contribute to their summative assignment.

Students work sequentially through five learning units, each of which contains a brief overview of theoretical concepts and supported with structured on-line activities. Each learning unit concludes with a summary identifying how learning from each on-line activity can be utilised within their summative assignment.



### Example 6

## Criminal Justice students produce videos and leaflets for public benefit

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In the module Crime and Criminality, part of the assessment is to produce a 30 second video and supporting leaflet around a crime prevention strategy. This could be something already operating, so to raise awareness or a completely new idea about how the public can protect themselves from being a victim of a particular crime. Once assessed, Superintendent Dave Hill will be looking at them to choose one that will feature in the Northants Police Website.

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### Example 7

## Student choice enhances and personalises Law projects

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In Law3019 (European and International Human Rights Law) assessment is by coursework. The first essay (40%) is a set question analysing technical aspects of treaty law. The remainder of the assessment is a research project split into an individual presentation (20%) and an essay (40%).

Students are free to choose their topic, as long as it broadly relates to a current human rights issue. This year, students covered a diverse range of topics including Australian asylum policy and law, extraordinary rendition of terrorist suspects, forced marriage, and discrimination on the grounds of sexuality.

The feedback from the students has been positive as this allows them to research a topic of particular interest to them, sometimes linking into other modules studied, sometimes to outside interests and future career plans. The external examiner has commented at last year's exam board and in her report on the creative and topical nature of the assessment. In terms of key skills, the assessment facilitates the development of higher level skills in relation to research, analysis, and written and oral communication.

### Example 8

## Paramedic Science students use videos to support peer-assessment of applied skills

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In the Paramedic Science division we use Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) to assess practical application of skills. For example, advanced life support can be demonstrated on mannequins using all of the actual equipment required. In practice sessions we asked the students to video their attempts on SMART phones, iPads or other devices, which can then be uploaded to NILE (the University's Virtual Learning Environment). These could then be viewed for self, peer and tutor review as formative assessment and feed-forward to improve performance. Initially, the students found this to be daunting but eventually came to value the opportunity to self-assess and refer back to their performance on past videos.

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### Example 9

## Distance Engineering students enjoy creative problem-solving to test their knowledge and understanding

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The Department of Engineering within the School of Science and Technology offers a unique course in non-destructive testing both at a foundation and bachelor degree levels. Since its inception, the course has been delivered in distance learning mode to accommodate the cohort of students who are interested in the course. They usually work in full time jobs in different parts of the world. Moreover, their jobs involve travelling to remote places for long periods of time at short notice.

While the provision of learning packages has been facilitated and organised through NILE (the University's Virtual Learning Environment), the assessment posed a number of challenges in terms of quality and rigour. This is evident from the high portion of students who achieve grades exceeding A-. One may argue that this is a testament to our quality of tuition of this course. However, it is difficult to reconcile these results with the assessment conditions where students are offered six weeks or more to answer a set of questions in an open book style and without the usual exam type time constraint. Furthermore, the external examiners have often expressed a concern about the distribution of grades. Professional accreditation bodies such the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) would not accredit a course where standard type exams do not represent a large proportion of the assessment.

Our aim and that of the accreditation institutions is to ascertain that a student with a mere pass is able to function as an engineer and the assessment should reflect that. In order to address this issue, we have sought to harness the capabilities of NILE to improve the quality of our assessment for distance learning students. We created assessments that include a range of question types from formulae to essays to cater for students with different skills. We also generated the same question with a different set of numerical values for each student using regular expression on NILE. Despite our best efforts, this has not resulted in a distribution of grades that is representative of students with different capabilities, albeit, there is a marked improvement. On a close inspection though, the essay type questions seem to produce a range of grades from a simple pass to distinction.

We have then generated a case study in non-destructive testing and invited students to submit an academic report discussing their approaches to the problem. In order to make the problems more interesting and thought provoking, we suggested using non-destructive testing methods that are non-standard and ask students to use their creative minds to make it work. We expect the distribution of the overall grades to change as a result of these changes. Thus far, it has proved to be instructive for students and lecturers alike. We intend to solicit some feedback from the current cohort of students to learn about their experience.

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### Example 10

## Theatre students co-construct online learning experience

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In Introduction to Theatre and Performance Theories and Practices (DRA1021), each group creates an online lecture based on a particular play. The online lecture must include performance work, text, visual images, and verbal analysis that contextualises and discusses the selected play and historical period. Essentially, this online lecture is an annotated piece of performance practice. One outcome from this assessment is that each participant will receive a suite of online presentations (the collected presentations) that they can use as teaching resources in their future careers. In this way we seek to make the assessment more relevant to each student, increase their engagement, and add value to their degree.

### Example 11

## Engaging and assessing Sport students through digital storytelling

*Dr Jim Lusted, Senior Lecturer in Sports Studies*

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For 3 years now I have run an assignment in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year SPO2002 Sport and Society module which originated as a 'digital storytelling' idea for a group project assessment. Students are asked to complete a small scale social research project on a topic related to inequalities in sport. I take them through each 'stage' of the research process (we have 7), and every week the seminars become group meetings in which students are asked to make decisions related to each stage. I set up a NILE journal tool for each group, and they are required to write a formal journal entry for each of the 7 weeks where they document and justify (with the aid of appropriate references) the choices they are making in relation to topic, methodology, design etc.

Upon completion of their journal diaries, I ask them to create a 5-10 minute movie documentary which should present their research project using these 7 stages as 'chapters' in their movie. I offer 30% of the mark for creative communication of their work, and students have come up with some fantastically original ideas (last year's highlight was the use of Lego figures to present a group meeting with Emile Durkheim, a famous sociologist).

Attendance for this part of the module is always high, and students often comment that they have never worked harder than on this assignment (a good thing?!), and take a lot of pride in getting their movie just right.

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## Example 12

# Patients and carers contribute to assessment of Health and Social Care students

Linda Lilley, Senior Lecturer in Practice Development

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Within the School of Health we have a fundamental role in preparing and supporting people to work with the public, patients, carers and service users. We feel it is only right that these people should be involved in as many aspects of this as possible. We believe patients/service users and carers should be part of providing feedback on health and social care undergraduate students' values and behaviours.

This is reinforced by the UK Government, who promote the idea that patients should contribute to the assessment of pre-registration student nurses. The Nursing and Midwifery Council promotes the idea that patients should contribute to the assessment of preregistration student nurses. With a strong emphasis currently on nursing becoming a more compassionate profession, the Francis report (2013) has highlighted a need to recruit, educate and assess nursing students with regard to their attitude, values, and beliefs in relation to providing care.

*Who better to ask than the patients/service users and carers?*

The following process was piloted and then implemented within all undergraduate nursing, midwifery and podiatry students from March 2014.

- Undergraduate students are introduced to service user and carer involvement and the role of the service user/carers in student assessment in first module of their education programme.
- Service user and carer feedback tools are available and are given to the Mentor by the student on placement.
- The Mentor/Assessor follows a four step process.
- Students' practice learning documents have specific area for discussion with Mentor and recording Service user/carers feedback

An e-learning activity was developed to support Mentors in this process. This is now an Open Education Resource available from <http://find.jorum.ac.uk/resources/18963>. Patient information posters were made available in practice areas and on digital display within patient areas in hospitals.



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### Example 13

## Concept maps support learning for Social and Community Development students

Mark Allenby, Senior Lecturer in Social Work

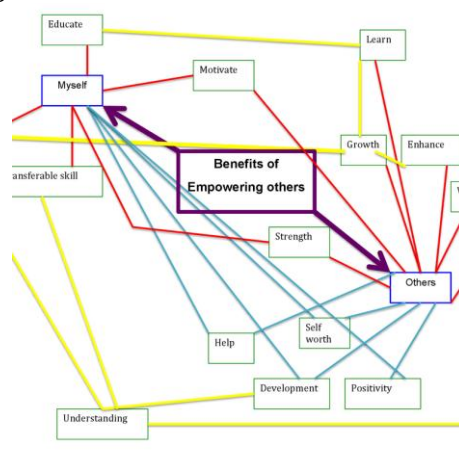
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We use 'concept maps' as an assessment tool within the Volunteering module (SWK1003). Students visualise the sub-concepts that make up a main concept. They can draw this out using whatever form or tool they want. It requires minimal grammatical competence but needs to show good conceptual understanding. The results were outstanding.



### Example 14

## Team Based Learning (TBL™) works for Law students

Nick Cartwright, Senior Lecturer in International Commercial Law

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Students take individual readiness assurance tests, then take the same test as a group. The group use the trademarked Instant Feedback Assessment Technique, essentially scratchcards, so they immediately know if they got the right answer. By assessing the students' readiness to move on to application exercises we should be able to address gaps in learning early on.

'Getting Started with TBL' by Larry K. Michaelson is available here <https://www.med.illinois.edu/FacultyDev/Classroom/InteractiveMethods/Michaelson.pdf>

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### Example 15

## Combining self-, peer- and tutor-assessment

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Facilitation, Assessment and Quality Assurance in Work Based Learning (MIDM006) has two items of assessment, one of which is an action learning group presentation which is self, peer and tutor assessed. This is followed by a moderation discussion that supports students using and understanding the use of grade criteria and giving verbal and written constructive feedback which is an essential part of their role in practice. This is an innovative approach to assessment that has previously been presented at an HEA workshop.

This approach is also used in Quality Enhancement in Interprofessional Work Based Learning (MIDM007). Both these modules make up the MSc Practice Education. We can have big discrepancy between self, peer and tutor grades and discussion can be quite lively. It is stipulated that the tutor has overall responsibility for the final agreed grade from a quality assurance perspective. We have been persuaded to move but have never moved out of the grade band and we do have discussion about this when we are grading ourselves. We have a normal distribution of grades and we have referred students however we have never had students refer themselves or their peers.

As this is a group project we allocate all group members with the same grade however every group has opportunity to speak to the tutors if they feel strongly that someone has not properly contributed to the activity, there must be unanimous agreement from all other group members about this. On one occasion a group felt strongly that one member had not contributed and her grade was altered to reflect this.

As well as the action learning students submit a 4,000 word critical reflective account and students are required to pass both items of assessment for both modules.







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