Principle 7:
Inbuilding assessment activities that foster employability

What the principle means

The purposes of higher education include developing students as active citizens and rounded people, as well as preparing them for graduate employment. Both to help students engage with programmes and to foster their life-wide skills and capabilities to work, it's helpful if we directly address their potential abilities as employees.

Questions to consider with your course team and students

- Are there clear links between the assignments you set and employability? For example, do you make it possible for students to answer questions at interview like 'Can you tell us about an opportunity where you have… worked as a member of a team… solved problems…worked with incomplete or conflicting information…presented your research via a variety of different media/for different audiences…' etc?
- Are the assessed tasks you are setting authentic and meaningful to the students? (Arnold, 2019; Sokhanvar et al., 2021).
- Are they fit-for-purpose? (Brown and Race, in Hunt and Chalmers, 2021).
- Is it likely that students will see the purpose and value of the assessments in terms of their future lives as employees, graduates and citizens?
- If you use lab reports, do you have a clear rationale for why students are being asked to write them and how this activity relates to what they are likely to be asked to do in future careers?
- Do they write up while in the labs directly onto PCs/laptops/phones or do you ask them to transcribe handwritten notes at home?
- Do they need to write up the methodology separately even if this has been provided for them as part of the brief? Where there are multiple markers, including perhaps demonstrators, how do you ensure inter-assessor reliability?

Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 7, 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 7.

Principle 7 worksheet - Inbuilding assessment activities that foster employability

Principle focus	Specific actions you will take:	Responsible leader:	Help/resources needed to make this happen:	Milestones (timescale for implementation):	Performance indicators:
e.g. Authentic Assessment as it relates to employability	e.g. • Learn more about authentic assessment as it relates to employability • Identify examples of employability-inflected authentic assessment within the programme. • Identify models of good practice re authentic assessment and employability. • Consider where employability-inflected authentic assessment might be included in the programme.	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. • Professional learning on authentic assessment and employability – resources, workshops, sharing good practice across the team, conversations with students, employers etc. • Module outlines and programme documentation • Support from CTL colleagues • Time to work as a programme team • Administrative support	e.g. One academic year	e.g. • Greater knowledge of employability and authentic assessment across the team, including models of good practice. • Document noting examples of employability-inflected authentic assessment. • Records of discussions across team.

About this resource

This resource is drawn from the *Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design* (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 7 – Inbuilding assessment activities that foster employability'. 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:

Arnold, L. (2019) *Unlocking the power of authentic assessment*, Edinburgh Napier University ARISE lecture. Available at: https://liveharperac- my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/larnold_harper-adams_ac_uk/ESLnZO5Z1B1MplE43e905AABL1DLF muxTYGiyflL80-Zzw?rtime=7xU2PipC2kg

Brown, S. and Race, P. (2021) 'Chapter 6. Using effective assessment and feedback to promote learning', in Hunt, L. and Chalmers, D. (eds) *University teaching in focus*. Victoria, Australia: Acer Press, pp. 74-91.

Sokhanvar, Z., Salehi, K. and Sokhanvar, F. (2021) 'Advantages of authentic assessment for improving the learning experience and employability skills of higher education students: A systematic literature review', *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 70, p.101030, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2021.101030
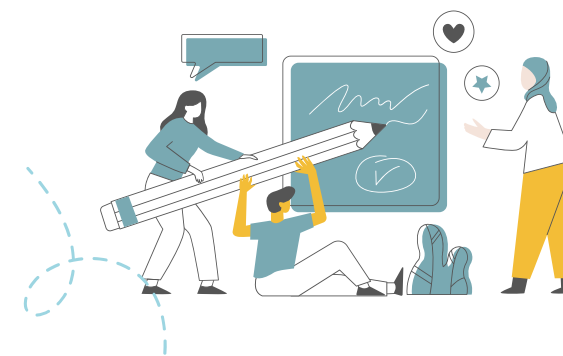
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