Title: **Exploring critical incidents in assessment**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify critical incidents in their own learning about assessment
- Use critical incidents to analyse assessment
- Consider the emotional aspects of assessment
- Review the assessment cycle to identify key points for lecturers and learners

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Assessment is a complex process that is demanding of lecturers and learners. There is considerable literature but the link between research and practice is not that strong (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007, p. 7) as assessment is carried out. Three key emergent ideas relate to constructive alignment of learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003, p. 25), the role of classroom assessment and appropriate feedback i.e. assessment for learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998) and assessment of programme learning outcomes (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007, p.157, HETAC, 2009, p. 7). This session explores these three ideas in practice through Brookfield's critical incident approach (1990, pp. 31-33). Participants will be asked to identify and share critical incidents in their experience and understanding of assessment using an adapted version of Brookfield's experiencing learning questionnaire (Brookfield, 1990, p. 32) with the theme experience assessment as an assessor. This will be prompted by the presenters sharing of such critical incidents. The critical incidents will then guide the session as they are discussed and considered. Common themes will be identified, as well as the cognitive learning and affective learning. The critical incidents will be linked to the three key ideas above and learning for lecturers identified. This overview enables participants to match assessment theory to their own assessment practice and assessment practices in their own institutions. These are then applied to the assessment cycle. Putting assessment theory into practice is challenging, it makes us confront deeply held but often unacknowledged beliefs about teaching, learning and assessment. This workshop aims to explore these beliefs through the critical incident approach and enable participants to identify practical strategies for developing assessment.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings
Please provide an indication of how the session will be structured and how activities and discussion will be facilitated. For discussion papers please include a few indicative questions which will focus the discussion element.

Activity	Time
1. Introduction	5 min
2. Discussion of critical incidents' protocol and agreement of participants to share	
3. Development of individual critical incidents (two requested – one specifically on feedback) using an adapted version of Brookfield (1990, p. 32)	15 min
4. Sharing of critical incidents – presenters and feedback from participants	
5. Analysis What are the common themes from the critical incidents? What learning is there from the critical incidents? What do we know about assessment/feedback? How do we feel about assessment/feedback?	10 min
6. Key issues in assessment for lecturers/participants What do they need to know? What do they need to be able to do? How do they feel about assessment/feedback? How can they work with colleagues about assessment/feedback?	10 min
7. Putting the learning into practice in the assessment process Consideration of the assessment cycle Identification of practical strategies for improving assessment	5 min overview

References

Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University Second Edition,* Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press

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Bloxham, S. and Boyd, P. (2007) *Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education A Practical Guide,* Maidenhead, Open University Press

Brookfield, S. (1990) *The Skilful Teacher,* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Higher Education and Training Awards Council (2009) *Assessment and Standards,* Dublin HETAC.
http://www.hetac.ie/docs/Fina%20English%20Assessment%20and%20Standards%20 2009.pdf

Palmer, P. (1998) *The Courage to Teach,* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass