Title: **Joining The Dots: Making Sense of Assessment At Programme Level**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand the benefits of examining assessment at whole programme level
- Understand how the TESTA methodology operates in a research intensive university and its associated pros and cons
- Examine possible changes to assessment practices and their impact
- The role of educational developers in shaping and supporting assessment change/practice

Session Outline

Assessment is a key cornerstone of what drives students at University and is critical in shaping a student's learning experience (Brown and Knight, 1994). Yet, students remain dissatisfied with assessment and feedback. And despite efforts by Schools/Departments to address some of the concerns particularly those raised by NSS scores, module evaluation forms and external examiners, it remains a problematic issue. A key issue I found was academics tended to focus on individual modules rather than examining the programme as a whole. Exploring assessment at programme level has it benefits and when this is done by impartial eyes the benefits are furthered (Jessop, Hakim, Gibbs, 2011). As a non-academic, working within the Centre for Academic Practice, Loughborough University (as a Quality Enhancement Learning Teaching Officer) I was able to help academic teams in identifying specific issues linked to assessment and feedback using the well-known TESTA framework. As someone outside of the Department/School I was able to collate a detailed overview of assessment and feedback practices across different programmes, without bias. The reports were powerful as it gave programme teams and senior management a holistic and comprehensive evidence based approach to make meaningful changes to assessment practices on programmes. This evidence based approach I found particularly useful in getting a research intensive university, like Loughborough, to take on the teaching agenda and its associated challenges.

This paper reflects on this process and examines the changes programmes teams have brought in as a result of the TESTA reports and will begin to explore the potential impact of these changes. In doing so, the paper also explores how educational developers can use the evidence based approach of TESTA to get programmes teams and in particular members of

the senior management team to think more critically about their assessment and feedback practices.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

- 15 minute presentation
- 20 minutes discussion and Q & A
- 10 minutes for groups to feed forward specific ideas/plans/hopes they would like to see applied at their institutions, in regards to exploring/changing assessment and feedback practice.
- Possible discussion questions
    - How do you get academics to rethink assessment practices?
    - How do you get programmes teams to buy into to the TESTA process?
    - What difficulties arise in conducting the research?
    - How can you assess impact?

References

Brown, S. & Knight, P. (1994) Assessing Learners in Higher Education, London: Kogan Page

Jessop, T, McNab, N. And Gubby, L. (2012) Mind the gap: An analysis of how quality assurance procedures influence programme assessment patterns. *Active Learning in Higher Education*. 13(3) 143-154. Available at: http://alh.sagepub.com/content/13/2/143.full.pdf+html

Jessop, T, El Hakim, Y. and Gibbs, G. (2011) The TESTA Project: Research Inspiring Change. *Educational Developments* 12(4), 12-16.