

Title: **What are we assessing? The Impact of NSS and TEF metrics on the assessment strategy in a Post-1992 School of Business and Law**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify strategies for reconciling student (customer) satisfaction with student employability and cognitive development/developing self-efficacy in assessment strategies
- Develop strategies for enhancing students understanding of different types of assessment and assessment criteria
- Embed constructivist learning techniques into assessment that move beyond learned helplessness and extrinsic motivation

Session Outline

In this session, the findings of an embedded case study, which explored how a Post-92 Business and Law school evaluated their assessment strategy from the in-depth perspective of students and staff is explored. In the context of needing to improve both employability ratings and academic attainment, key TEF metrics, the study revealed how an imbalance for employment-oriented engagement and the pressure of the NSS meant some students were developing learned helplessness and failing to develop key skills relating to critical awareness and deep learning, potentially undermining efforts to develop 'future employees' and meet key employability targets. An inherent tension has always existed in business management curricula between stimulating instrumental (employment oriented) engagement and academic engagement (Flynn 2014). With the rise of metrics systems that emphasize student experience and employability outcomes, reconciling these tensions in the form of an effective assessment strategy becomes increasing problematic.

The session explores in-depth the importance of seeking to understand the motivations behind particular patterns of engagement in assessments for different students and contexts, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds (Hibbert, 2015). In addition, the importance of supporting academic staff in embedding best practice into assessment strategy to achieve the desired employability and academic attainment outcomes, will be explored. Key findings from the case study reveal how, without wider institutional support

in terms of study skills, good practice guidance such as providing a supportive Year 4 can inhibit the development of independent learning and increase co-dependency (on other students and academic staff). The core findings reveal the need for a more integrated, holistic institutional and departmental approach to both formative and summative assessment, in particular assessment for learning, using mentoring and coaching to encourage conceptual and deep learning and student progression.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

0-5 minutes; Introduction to the research, background on speakers and motives and drivers for the research

5-20 minutes; Group discussion on the perceptions of the role metrics play influence pedagogical decisions. Exploring the following issues:

- Is the institutional/school assessment strategy piecemeal or holistic in nature?
- Are you able to develop assessment strategies which improve progression and student satisfaction and which also develop student employability and critical thinking?
- How are the NSS and TEF metrics impacting on your institution's assessment strategy?
- How motivated are academics in developing their assessment strategies?
- How is wider student support impacting on student success in assessment?
- How might assessment strategy improve at the institutional, school and classroom levels?

20-35 minutes; Presentation of the findings of the focus groups on the role metrics played in assessment strategy, including lessons learnt.

35-45 minutes; Concluding remarks and discussion of the case study findings and implications for practice in other institutions.

References

Collini, S., 2012. *What are universities for?*. Penguin: London.

Hibbert, P. (2015) Undergraduate retention and attainment in Business and Management: A literature Review. HEA: London

Frankham, J (2016) [Employability and higher education: the follies of the 'Productivity Challenge' in the Teaching Excellence Framework](#). Journal of Education Policy.

Flynn, D. (2014) Baccalaureate Attainment of College Students at 4-year Institutions as a Function of Student Engagement Behaviors: Social and Academic Student Engagement Behaviors Matter. *Research in Higher Education*, 55 (5) 467–93.