Title: **More than the metrics - our deep dive into assessment workload**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

1. Discuss the challenges associated with assessment workload for staff and students in their own context.
2. Critically evaluate our approach to the study with a view to implementing this or a similar study in their institution.

Session Outline

It has been pointed out that 'assessment is probably the most important determinant of the character of a course and of student learning within the course' (Scott, 2015: 700). Indeed, as Biggs and Tang (2011: 196) point out, 'assessment is the senior partner in learning and teaching. Get it wrong and the rest collapses'. Thus, mindful of assessment as a key 'driver' of student learning (Race, 2007) and of the importance of better understanding student and staff experiences of assessment, this session will report on the outcomes of a research project at Dublin City University which sought to profile summative assessment workloads within programmes, examining the assessment experience of students and staff within programmes and across disciplines.

Recent research suggests that in Ireland the average number of summative assessments in a single-semester 5 ECTS module is 2.6, while students complete an average 2.8 assessments in a full-year 10 ECTS module (National Forum, 2016). Additionally, there is a growing body of international research which points to negative impacts of over-assessment, from both a staff and student perspective (e.g. Fielding, 2008; Harland *et al*, 2015; Jessop *et al*, 2014; Ramsden, 1992). This research study builds on these findings by reporting the assessment experience of students from multiple disciplines and at different stages of their studies in our institution. Metrics measured are (following Scott, 2015):
- number of summative assessment tasks
- word count and equivalences
- student time on task
- time involved in designing an assessment task and in marking (staff)

- time involved in giving feedback (staff)

This study aims to investigate the extent of the assessment overload issue for both staff and students and is being undertaken to encourage programme teams to adopt a programmatic approach to assessment including taking data-informed decisions to enhance the student experience.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

The presentation will provide a background to our research, our findings and recommendations. In terms of activities it will contain a mixture of polling the audience (2 minutes) and technology-enabled breakout sessions (3 x 6 minutes), using tools like mind-maps, Padlet etc.

Potential discussion questions:
- What are the challenges of measuring assessment workload?
- How does your institution currently compare workloads of different modes of assessment across disciplines?
- How do we engage with staff to take a more programmatic view of assessment to enhance the student experience?

This session will close with a crowd-sourcing activity as we engage the collective brains of the SEDA community to influence the future shape of this project.

References

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