



# Guide for (Re) Designing 'Fit-For-Purpose' Assessment Tasks

Guidelines to create valid, reliable, authentic  
and transparent [first year and other]  
assessment tasks

For subject coordinators, course coordinators and others  
involved in assessment design, practice and policy  
development.

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This Guide for (Re)Designing 'Fit-For-Purpose' Assessment Tasks was developed for the Faculty of Arts, Education and Social Sciences at James Cook University by Dr Maree DinanThompson of the School of Education.

This Guide has been adapted from Dr Kerri-Lee Harris' (2005) Guide for Reviewing Assessment, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, and Phil Race's (2007) guidelines for 'Fit for Purpose' Assessment (see <http://phil-race.co.uk/>).

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## Guide for (re)designing 'fit-for-purpose' assessment tasks

James Cook University will soon launch a refreshed suite of courses that reflect the newly developed Strategic Intent and University Plan. This Guide for (re)designing 'fit-for-purpose' assessment tasks supports the following Curriculum Refresh questions aligned with the University Plan:

### **A2 Enhance the quality of our teaching courses**

2.3 Have we reviewed assessment practices and progression criteria?

### **A4 Offer a socially inclusive learning environment**

4.2 How does the curriculum support the best possible first year experience?

The FAESS Staff website -Teaching and Learning section provides essential resources and links to JCU Teaching and Learning Policies – see

[http://cms.jcu.edu.au/faess\\_intranet/JCUPRD\\_040147](http://cms.jcu.edu.au/faess_intranet/JCUPRD_040147)

Research about assessment in higher education in the United Kingdom (Biggs, 2003; Brown, Race and Smith, 2005; Race, 2006) suggests that assessment is the 'weakest link' and there is a need to focus on assessment tasks and practices to make a change in the quality of student learning. More recently for higher education has been the promotion of authentic assessment (real-life, connected assessment tasks), WIL (work-integrated learning), and emphasis on curriculum and assessment design in first year subjects to improve retention (see Sally Kift and Keithia Wilson and Alf Lizzio's strategies listed below) .

The *Guide for (Re)Designing 'Fit-For-Purpose' Assessment Tasks* is a question-based checklist on the fundamental components of Race's (2005) 'fit-for-purpose' assessment. It is structured around the following:

- Is the assessment task valid?
  - *In what ways is it ensured that assessment measures effectively what it intends to measure?*
- Is the assessment task reliable?
  - *In what ways is it ensured that assessment is fair and consistent?*
- Is the assessment task authentic?
  - *In what ways is it ensured that assessment is connected to a real-life application, and is owned by the student?*
- Is the assessment task transparent?
  - *In what ways is it ensured that assessment is matched to subject description and outcomes, including graduate attributes and any professional standards (where necessary)?*

Each component is supported by trigger questions and example responses (as illustrations). The activity page asks for exploration of current practices by examining ONE assessment task in response to the 'fit-for-purpose' component. Further, it is encouraged that issues, future actions, and responsibilities are stated as an action plan.

Several appendices or links to websites are provided at the end of the booklet for future exploration and (re)design of assessment tasks.

## Purposes of assessment

Assessment provides an evaluation of the student's competence in meeting specified objectives but it is also an essential part of the teaching and learning process. Properly selected assessment tasks help students to structure their time, signal the importance of particular content, skills and concepts, and influence approaches to study. Constructive and timely feedback on assessment helps students to gain a sense of progress, knowledge of standards and criteria for judgements in a field, and to learn from their attempts.

([http://www.jcu.edu.au/policy/teaching/teaching/JCUDEV\\_006893.html](http://www.jcu.edu.au/policy/teaching/teaching/JCUDEV_006893.html))

Common assessment principles include the necessity for tasks to:

- Be comprehensive, valid and reliable;
- Be ongoing (diagnostic, formative and summative);
- Where possible, occur in meaningful/real life/authentic contexts;
- Be fair, equitable and socially just;
- Be used to make judgements about student learning/achievement;
- Help evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programs; and
- Assist in the decisions about students' future learning (Hay, 2009, p. 216).

## Suggested assessment strategies in FIRST YEAR subjects:

From Sally Kift (2005) *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy First Year Curriculum Principles: First year teacher making a difference.*

<p><b>5. Assessment</b> The first year curriculum should assist students to make a successful transition to assessment in higher education, while assessment should increase in complexity from the first to later years of curriculum design. Critically, students should receive regular, formative evaluations of their work early in their program of study to aid their learning and to provide feedback to both students and staff on student progress and achievement.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schedule an early piece of formative assessment to be submitted and returned before Week 4 to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relieve early student anxiety</li> <li>• provide feedback to both students and staff on student progress and achievement</li> <li>• identify students in need of extra support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Be consistent regarding communication of assessment expectations across the first year – use consistent criteria and standards, naming of assessment tasks, use of assessment verbs, etc.</li> <li>3. Make class time available to discuss with students tertiary assessment practices and expectations (e.g., to achieve shared understanding of meaning of assessment criteria; provide examples of good, fair and poor performance of assessment criteria; try correcting a piece of writing using track changes function in large class; have class (including teacher) write a paragraph to swap and mark against criteria; discuss the nature, quantity, and use of feedback with students).</li> </ol>
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From Keithia Wilson and Alf Lizzio (JCU SDVC Seminar Series 2009, 'Enhancing Learning and Teaching' session):

<p><b>Strategy Set 7: Enhancing Assessment Practice</b> <b>Key Idea: Optimising an experience of 'early success' builds academic and personal efficacy</b></p>	<p>Key Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the nature and timing of early assessment</li> <li>• emphasis on formative assessment</li> <li>• the process of preparing assessment – scaffolding assessment preparation (practice items, essay writing etc.)</li> <li>• the process of debriefing and learning from early assessment (summarise and feedback cohort strengths and weaknesses)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy Set 7: First Assessment Feedback</b> <b>Key Idea: Efficacy building for students who 'fail' for 'marginal pass' first assessment in a core course</b></p>	<p>Key Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students complete a self-directed workbook specific to assessment task</li> <li>• individual structured session with tutor leading to action plan</li> <li>• follow-up phone or email contact</li> </ul>

## Extracts from 'Making Learning Happen': Phil Race Chapter 4: Assessment driving learning <http://phil-race.co.uk/>

### Towards assessment becoming a *better* driver for learning

Let me end this chapter by returning to some tactics which can play their part in helping to bring assessment closer to the intention to make learning happen.

- 1. Diversify assessment more, and move away from over-use of just two or three assessment formats.** In particular, we need to ensure that our assessment systems do not end up just measuring how skilled (or unskilled) our learners are in a limited range of assessment contexts, such as *just* a mixture of time-constrained unseen written exams, tutor-marked essays and reports.
- 2. Make assessment fit-for-purpose, so that we measure what we really should be measuring – not just ghosts of learners' learning.** We need to revisit the validity of each and every form of assessment we employ, and choose those which are good at measuring what students have really learned.
- 3. Make assessment a high-learning-payoff experience for learners by making the most of feedback to students.** We need to think ahead to how we will give feedback to students after each element of assessment, and to how useful that feedback can be, even when the main purposes of assessment are summative rather than formative.
- 4. Reduce the burden of assessment for learners, and for ourselves.** We have got our education systems into a state where assessment all too often militates against deep learning, and takes much of the enjoyment out of learning. Reducing the amount quite dramatically – by a factor of three or four perhaps – can be part of the pathway towards increasing the quality of assessment and the usefulness of associated feedback to learners.
- 5. Assess evidence of what learners have learned, not just what we have tried to teach them.** It may be instinctive to try to find out what students have learned as a direct result of what we have tried to teach, but there should be more to assessment than just this. We need to be able to credit learners for their achievements in learning they have done for themselves, and with each other.
- 6. Assess students' evidence of their learning more reliably.** Most assessors are aware that assessment is rarely an exact science, yet with so much depending on the marks and grades we award learners, we need to be constantly striving to make each assessment element as reliable as we can, so we can make learners feel more assured that they are being assessed fairly – and also so that employers and others can have more trust in the results of our assessments.
- 7. Focus learning outcomes on 'need-to-know' rather than 'nice-to-know' material – and stop measuring things which are 'nuts-to-know'!** Too often, it is possible to look at what is *really* being measured by an exam question or assignment, and find ourselves asking 'why on earth are we causing learners to learn *this* bit?'. Sometimes, our reply to ourselves – if we're honest – is as banal as 'well, at least this lends itself to being measured!'. Not a good enough reason. What is measured by assessment should be easily recognised as being important, not just interesting.
- 8. Measure 'know-how' and 'know-why' much more, and 'know-what' much less.** In other words, move learning away from information-recall and regurgitation, and strive to use assessment to encourage learners to make sense of what they have learned, and towards being able to explain it and apply it rather than merely describe it.
- 9. Involve learners in assessing their own and each others' work to deepen their learning, and help them to get their heads round how we conduct assessment.** The more learners know about how assessment really works, the better they can do themselves justice in preparing for it and demonstrating their learning back to us. There is no better way than helping them to develop self-assessment and peer-assessment skills, to deepen their learning and acclimatise them to the assessment culture they are part of.
- 10. Get our wording right – in our outcomes, briefings, tasks and criteria – write them all in English, not in 'academese'.** Too often, whether in exams or other assessment contexts, learners who are skilled at working out exactly what our assessment tasks actually *mean* achieve better results than equally-deserving learners who are not so skilled. Teaching is about effective communication, not playing word games.

## Component 1

### Is the assessment task valid?

Questions	<p><i>"Validity refers to the appropriateness and accuracy of your assessment...[validity] is specific to some use or interpretation - no result is valid for all purposes" (Athanasou &amp; Lamprianou, 2002, pp.167-8).</i></p> <p><i>Representativeness, rubric and relevance (Borich &amp; Tombari, 1999, pp. 234-5)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>• be clear about the cognitive learning skills and dispositions you want to assess and require a variety of products that reflect these (content validity)</i></li><li><i>• design clear criteria and address standards for judgment (content validity and equity validity)</i></li><li><i>• design task to address process, product, age/level appropriateness (construct validity)</i></li></ul> <p><b>In what ways is it ensured that assessment measures effectively what it intends to measure?</b></p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the content of the task measure the stated learning outcomes?</li><li>• Is the task designed to ensure that content chosen can be adequately demonstrated?</li><li>• Is the task designed so that intervening skills/knowledge (e.g. reading skills, graphing skills) do not diminish possibilities of demonstrating student learning?</li><li>• Are the criteria and standards (HD, D, C, P, N) aligned with the task requirements and learning outcomes?</li><li>• Is the task formative or summative – does this have effect on what and how it measures?</li></ul>
Examples	<p>A Maths Portfolio designed to assess growth in problem solving ability – evaluation criteria places emphasis on final solution to the exclusion of the process used to get there.</p> <p>A series of multiple choice questions as a summative task – ESL students are likely to be disadvantaged in the interpretation of the statements.</p> <p>An in-class essay (and criteria) that intends to measure developing arguments, reflecting, evaluating, assessing and justifying concepts and content but judgment is more about the <i>ability to write neatly, quickly and eloquently about concept/content.</i></p> <p>Issues of validity focus on the choice, construction, wording and layout of the assessment task.</p>

**Component 1**

**In what ways is it ensured that assessment is measuring what it intends to measure?**

**Current practice**

Subject:

Assessment task title:

**Issues, future actions, responsibilities**

## Component 2

### Is the assessment task reliable?

<i>Questions</i>	<p><i>The consistency or accuracy of the outcome of the assessment process...assessors' understanding of the expected standards and their knowledge and skill are the most crucial elements (Australian Nursing Council, 2002).</i></p> <p><i>A reliable assessment task is one which consistently achieves the same results with the same or similar cohort of students. Various factors affect reliability - ambiguous questions, too many options within a question paper, vague marking instructions and poorly trained assessors (Department of Education &amp; Training, Northern Territory, 2008).</i></p> <p><i>Reliability can only be tested by blind multiple marking (Race, 2005).</i></p> <p><b>In what ways is it ensured that assessment is fair and consistent?</b></p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the task description and requirements unambiguous?</li><li>• Is the language level appropriate to the learner's level?</li><li>• Do the students understand what is required of them?</li><li>• Do the students understand what is a quality response and what is a poor response?</li><li>• Is the task criteria specific to the standards (HD, D, C, P, N) clear to students? [Does the task have criteria? Does the task make explicit the standards for each criteria and their weighting?]</li><li>• Are the standards applied consistently to all students?</li><li>• Are assessors trained?</li><li>• Is a (blind) moderation process in place for multiple assessors?</li></ul>
<i>Examples</i>	<p>Criteria refer to the properties, requirements or characteristics of the assessment task. A standard is a level of attainment (HD, D, C, P, N). To increase reliability of assessment tasks, both should be made explicit to learners.</p> <p>How many of you have undertaken a trial of marking to 'get a feel' for task responses? This is referred to as 'cohort referencing' (Sadler, 2003) and is a norm-based grading process as it is perceived that the standards are not an existence separate from lecturers, subject or students.</p> <p>Blind sampling involves the selection of cohort samples (approximately 5-10) and sending out to multiple assessors (could include cross-campus). Assessor grades sample by looking for evidence of achievement (not what isn't there) and provides feedback according to criteria and standards. Moderation is then convened via discussion of grades. This can be done before overall cohort marking commences to inform assessors' professional judgments, or at end of marking to justify/confirm professional judgments.</p>

## Component 2

**In what ways is it ensured that assessment is fair and consistent?**

### **Current practice**

Subject:

Assessment task title:

### **Issues, future actions, responsibilities**

### Component 3

#### Is the assessment task authentic?

<p>Questions</p>	<p><b><i>Authentic assessment promotes worthwhile, significant and meaningful learning...active construction of knowledge...where students bring their own strategies and styles...and skills and strategies are best acquired in realistic context and authentic settings(Newman and Associates, 1998).</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Authentic curriculum requires</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ <i>Direct examination of student performance on worthy intellectual tasks</i></li><li>➤ <i>Requires students to be effective performers with acquired knowledge</i></li><li>➤ <i>Present the student with a full array of tasks</i></li><li>➤ <i>Attend to whether the student can craft polished, thorough and justifiable answers, performances or products</i></li><li>➤ <i>Achieves validity and reliability by emphasising and standardising the appropriate criteria for scoring varied products</i></li><li>➤ <i>Involves ill structured challenges that help students rehearse for the complex ambiguities of professional life (Wiggins, 1990).</i></li></ul> <p><b><i>Authenticity also refers to assessing the work of the student, not other people's work [linked to concepts of invigilation and plagiarism] (Race, 2006).</i></b></p> <p><b>In what ways is it ensured that assessment is connected to a real-life application, and is owned by the student?</b></p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the assessment task make a connection to and transfer to the world beyond the classroom?</li><li>• Does the assessment task replicate conditions under which the performance would normally occur in the real-world application?</li><li>• Does the task allow for production of knowledge from acquired concepts/content/skills (rather than reproduction)?</li><li>• Is the task designed to ensure that you are 'thoroughly satisfied' that the student is the author?</li><li>• Does the assessment task state requirements for appropriate referencing conventions and interpretations of 'originality'?</li><li>• Could the task be personalised to cater for real-world application and ownership issues?</li></ul>
<p>Examples</p>	<p>Authentic assessment can be linked to performance assessment and work-integrated learning (WIL). For example, in professional subjects, student assessment may require assessment via practicum or placement. For other subjects, involvement with industry or business can produce significant and meaningful assessment tasks.</p> <p>For purposes of authorship, authenticity can be created via links to real-world and personalisation. For example, in an English Literature assignment where graduates are likely to pursue professional life in letters or publishing students were given an alternative to an essay, where they could choose they can choose a simulated real life projects: A Dictionary of Quotations on an Eighteenth-Century Theme, A glossary of Literary Devices in Eighteenth-Century Literature, An Annotated Edition, or An Introduction to an Anthology. (Torre, 2008).</p>

### Component 3

**In what ways is it ensured that assessment is connected to a real-life application, and is owned by the student?**

#### **Current practice**

Subject:

Assessment task title:

#### **Issues, future actions, responsibilities**

## Component 4

### Is the assessment task transparent?

<i>Questions</i>	<p><i>Transparency is the extent to which learners know where the goalposts are...matching up assessment criteria to intended learning outcomes...a problem: some of the actual learning outcomes go far beyond the intended learning outcomes (Race, 2005).</i></p> <p><i>Learners often find it hard to get insider our assessment culture - the very culture which will determine the level of their awards (Race, 2005).</i></p> <p><i>Biggs (2002) calls for constructive alignment - outcomes, assessment, resources, teaching and cohort - explicitness and transparency.</i></p> <p><b>In what ways is it ensured that assessment is matched to subject description and outcomes, including graduate attributes and professional standards (where necessary)?</b></p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are the relationships between subject outcomes, learning exercises and assessment tasks made explicit?</li><li>• Does the task criteria (and standards) utilise specific terminology to match learning outcomes, graduate attributes and professional standards?</li><li>• Does the assessment task ask for more than demonstration of the intended learning outcome(s)?</li><li>• Taken together, does the suite of assessment tasks that a student experiences over the course of their studies align with the graduate attributes specified for that course?</li></ul>
<i>Examples</i>	<p>A section in the subject outline template lists assessment tasks with targeted graduate attributes and professional standards (where necessary). Is this explicitness transferred to assessment task descriptions (including scaffolding) and criteria in the form of a rubric?</p> <p>An effective example of transparency is the use of an e-portfolio in a capstone subjects (Hickey, 2009). Professional standards are targeted for within assessment tasks. Students are required to submit tasks in the e-portfolio providing personal descriptions of professional standards, explanation of the teaching/learning activity, analysis of the activity with links to theoretical literature and critical reflection of task with emphasis on continued development. The component of authenticity is strongly embedded here too.</p>

#### Component 4

**In what ways is it ensured that assessment is matched to subject description and outcomes, including graduate attributes and professional standards (where necessary)?**

#### **Current practice**

Subject:

Assessment task title:

#### **Issues, future actions, responsibilities**

## **FY Curriculum Design Principles**

From Kift's 2008 ALTC Project *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy*. See resources at <http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design>.

Adapted here by Tanya Acheson, FYEProject Leader, JCU

### **First Year Curriculum Principle – Transition**

**The first year curriculum explicitly assists transition academically and socially into learning in higher education.**

Good first year curriculum design aids transition *from* a student's previous educational experience to the nature of learning in higher education and their new discipline as part of their life long learning journey. *For example:*

- students might be asked to self-assess their entering knowledge, skills and attitudes against discipline expectations;
- curriculum time might be devoted to discussing expectations and responsibilities (e.g., draw up a student/staff contract; agreeing a statement on what "independent learning" means: Healy, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study);

**\*JCU Example:** Students identify their personal strengths and challenges and work with staff to develop and commit to an individual learning plan. This plan includes practical strategies to support their academic success. The learning plan is reviewed at key points throughout the academic year.

- endemic program-choice uncertainty might be attended to by embedding career modules/career planning opportunities and/or investigating what it is to be a XYZ professional (Nelson, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study).

**\*JCU Example:** Careers & Employment online resource supports students to begin career planning from first year.  
([http://www.jcu.edu.au/careers/JCUDEV\\_003482.html](http://www.jcu.edu.au/careers/JCUDEV_003482.html))

### **First Year Curriculum Principle – Diversity**

**The first year curriculum embraces the diversity and reality of students' backgrounds, previous experiences and preparedness for university.**

Good first year curriculum design acknowledges student diversity because diversity may exacerbate transition issues and, in the current massified sector, few assumptions can be made about students' entering knowledge, skills and attitudes. Diversity in this context is very broad and includes, for example, membership of at-risk or equity groups, non-traditional cohorts, and students' various patterns and timing of engagement with the first year curriculum (e.g., mid-year entry). *For example:*

- students might be made aware of the diversity of their learning preference/ personality type/ preferred team role/ etc through self-reflective exercises;
- online quizzes could be made available to students to complete at their own pace;
- a diversity of learning, teaching and assessment approaches might be employed;
- attention could be paid to the scaffolding of academic skills and learning processes (e.g., by scaffolding reading through subject workbooks; discipline writing workshops in class time);

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\* For more information or to suggest a JCU example contact [FYE@jcu.edu.au](mailto:FYE@jcu.edu.au)

- self reflection of the individual student’s own cultural “grab-bag” might be incorporated.

**\*JCU Example:** Guided Learning Sessions, Home Groups or Small Group Mentor program to promote engagement in personal and professional development.

## First Year Curriculum Principle – Design

**The first year curriculum is designed intentionally for commencing students, based on evidence from practice and research.**

Good first year curriculum design is student-focussed, explicit and relevant and provides the foundation and scaffolding for learning success. The first year curriculum objectives should be articulated and, desirably, the first year curriculum should form a coherent, integrated whole. *For example:*

- student ePortfolio population and reflection might be built-in to emphasise the program’s career/ employability/ discipline relevance;

**\*JCU Example:** Careers & Employment online resource supports students to establish a professional ePortfolio (<http://www.jcu.edu.au/careers/>)

- a series of co-curricula presentations by the discipline’s researchers, industry representatives and alumni could be offered and students be required to attend X number to reflect on later in class;
- linkages could be intentionally promoted across individual first year subjects for a more integrative and holistic view of the curriculum (Westcott, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study).

**\*JCU Example:** First Year subject co-ordinators meet to map assessment and establish linkages across subjects.

## First Year Curriculum Principle – Engagement

**The first year curriculum incorporates pedagogies, teaching approaches and materials that engage students in their learning.**

Good first year curriculum design enacts an engaging and involving pedagogy. *AUSSE* (ACER, 2008) now provides us with very clear guidance around the “activities and conditions likely to generate high quality learning” (ACER, 2008, vi) and evidences that “all aspects of engagement have a strong positive relationship with a range of general, specific, social, personal, ethical and interpersonal capabilities” (ACER, 2008, ix). Pascarella & Terenzini (2005, 646) record that – With striking consistency, studies show that innovative, active, collaborative, and constructivist instructional approaches shape learning more powerfully, in some forms by substantial margins, than do conventional lecture-discussion and text-based approaches. *For example:*

- a team-based learning approach might be enacted in a first year subject (Michaelsen, Knight & Fink (2002); [www.teambasedlearning.org](http://www.teambasedlearning.org));
- teachers could model a “professional conversation” in a large first year group (Field & Kift, 2006);
- at least one first year subject might include a teamwork project;
- first year engagement might be structured through the use of workbooks and cumulative assessment pieces (latter, e.g., a reflective reading log, leading to a

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\* For more information or to suggest a JCU example contact [FYE@jcu.edu.au](mailto:FYE@jcu.edu.au)

preliminary essay plan, to a draft assignment, to the final assignment (Taylor, 2008));

- mentors and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) schemes might be built into curriculum and co-curriculum design;

**\*JCU Example:** Well established mentor programme supports new students during Orientation. Designated mentor leaders across a range of disciplines. Online mentor scheme established for students studying away from campus.

- academic mentors could be appointed for commencing students;
- first year students could be provided with a dedicated physical and/or virtual space (Nelson, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study).

## First Year Curriculum Principle – Assessment

### The first year curriculum aids transition to higher education assessment and provides early feedback.

Good first year curriculum design aids students' transition to higher education assessment, introduces a range of appropriate assessment practices and provides early feedback on student progress to students and staff. Assessment increases in complexity from first to later years. *For example:*

- a Feedback Strategy (e.g., as at <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/lid/ltweb/84079.htm>) could be developed and communicated;

**\*JCU Example:** Student Feedback Handbook and tips for encouraging students to give summative feedback. (<http://www.jcu.edu.au/teaching/evaluation/index.htm>)

- annotated examples of good, fair and poor performance of assessment criterion could be provided to students – the QUT Faculty of Education has an "assessment repository" full of examples for students (Healy, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study);

**\*JCU Example:** Model assignments available at writing skills online ([http://www.jcu.edu.au/learningskills/JCUPRD\\_035187.html](http://www.jcu.edu.au/learningskills/JCUPRD_035187.html))

- a piece of writing could be "corrected" in large group class using the track changes function for immediate feedback (Healy, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study);

**\*JCU Example:** Under examination conditions students receive marked examination papers and provided the opportunity to review their responses against model examples.

- the class, including the teacher, could produce a small piece of written work, swap it and mark it against criteria (Healy, 2008 ALTC Kift Fellowship Case Study);
- Taylor (2008) suggests in a first year maths subject that by Week 2 students could be required to have reflected on their previous maths experiences, confirm vital course information, and develop a study plan.

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\* For more information or to suggest a JCU example contact [FYE@jcu.edu.au](mailto:FYE@jcu.edu.au)

## First Year Curriculum Principle - Evaluation and Monitoring

### The first year curriculum should itself be evaluated and should monitor for student engagement.

Good first year curriculum design is itself evidence-based and evaluated, and desirably includes mechanisms to monitor for student engagement and performance, the latter allowing then for timely intervention in aid of students who are at risk of not being successful. *For example:*

- monitoring for (dis)engagement in a systematic way, so that timely interventions might be made, could entail:
  - taking attendance rolls;
  - knowing students by name;
  - involving peer mentors;
  - monitoring online interactions (LMS, email activation);
  - monitoring library activity;
  - noting non-submission of assessment;
  - noting poor performance on early assessment;
  
- QUT has a systematic approach entitled the "Student Success Project" (Duncan & Nelson, 2008); Auckland University of Technology, NZ has a systematic approach entitled "First Year Experience Intervention and Support Programme" ([http://auga.edu.au/gp/search/detail.php?gp\\_id=2907](http://auga.edu.au/gp/search/detail.php?gp_id=2907));

**\*JCU Example:** ON TRACK: Early Warning System and ON TRACK: Peer Support Programme support staff to identify disengaged students and implement a number of intervention strategies to help get them back ON TRACK.

See: S. Kift. (2008). The next, great first year challenge: Sustaining, coordinating and embedding coherent institution-wide approaches to enact the FYE as "everybody's business". In *11th International Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, An Apple for the Learner: Celebrating the First Year Experience*, 2008, Hobart, 16. Retrieved August 14, 2008 from [http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/past\\_papers/papers08/FYHE2008/content/pdfs/Keynote%20-%20Kift.pdf](http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/past_papers/papers08/FYHE2008/content/pdfs/Keynote%20-%20Kift.pdf)

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**First Year Design Principle Checklist (adapted from Kift, 2008):**

<b>Design Principle</b>	<b>Leading questions</b>	<b>Tick if evident in subject and/or assessment items</b>	<b>Notes/suggestions for future planning</b>
<b>Transition</b>	Does the subject assist transition academically into learning in higher education?		
	Is self-assessment evident to forecast future learning?		
	Is curriculum and assessment time devoted to discussing expectations and responsibilities?		
<b>Diversity</b>	Does the subject and assessment recognize diversity in the assessment types or modes of learning?		
	Is there evidence of formative assessment (e.g. online quizzes) that students can complete at own pace?		
	Is scaffolding of academic skills and assessment tasks evident?		
<b>Design</b>	Are learning outcomes and assessment tasks articulate? Aligned?		
	Do assessment tasks demonstrate formative and summative approaches?		
	Are linkages evident across CORE subjects/assessment items?		
<b>Engagement</b>	Does the subject and assessment create links to student interests and capabilities?		
	Does the subject and assessment allow for student engagement in active or collaborative manner?		
<b>Assessment</b>	Is there a variety of assessment types?		
	Are the tasks structured to provide quick feedback?		
	Are there opportunities for peer and self assessment?		
<b>Evaluation and Monitoring</b>	Is there a process for monitoring student engagement in this subject (e.g. participation in tutorials)		
	Are intervention strategies in place to assist 'at-risk' students?		

## Reducing your load: shortcuts to good feedback

### ***Keep records carefully***

- Be meticulous
- Be systematic
- Use technology to produce assessment records
- Use technology to save you from number-crunching
- Use other people (e.g. administration staff)

### ***Reduce your burden***

- Reduce the number of assignments
- Use shorter assignments
- Use assignment return sheets
- Consider using statement banks
- Involve students in self or peer assessment
- Mark some exercises in class time using self or peer assessment
- Do not count all assessments

### ***When you still find yourself overloaded***

- Put the great unmarked pile *under* your desk
- Set yourself progressive targets
- Make an even better marking scheme
- Mark in different places
- Mark one question at a time through all scripts, at first.

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