

# ***Assessment and Feedback: The Route to Success***



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# *Route*

- Starting points
- Destinations
- Milestones (staff)
- Navigation (students)
- Steering change

# ***Starting Points***

Where from?

Drivers to enrolment?

Goals?

Expectations?

# *Student expectations on entry to a business and management programme*

*A good teacher knows lots of 'right answers' and can:*

- 1. Make things simple*
- 2. Help students memorise key points in interesting ways*

*Assessment is about measurement and should be FAIR above all else.*

*Knowledge is certain and uncontested*

*There are 'right answers' and 'key points' that students must memorise*

*The knowledge you learn at school and university is mainly irrelevant to day-to-day life*

*Discussion with peers can be both muddling and time wasting*



## **Clarify expectations through early assessment:**

**Also engender good study habits; diagnose areas of individual difficulty; promote engagement**

*“Setting students assignments as soon as they arrive at university could help cut dropout rates.....integrate students into university life as quickly as possible. This involves making them aware of the quality and quantity of work expected from them.....The freedom...is too much for some and they probably need more structure in the first year.”*

Higher, 24/1/03

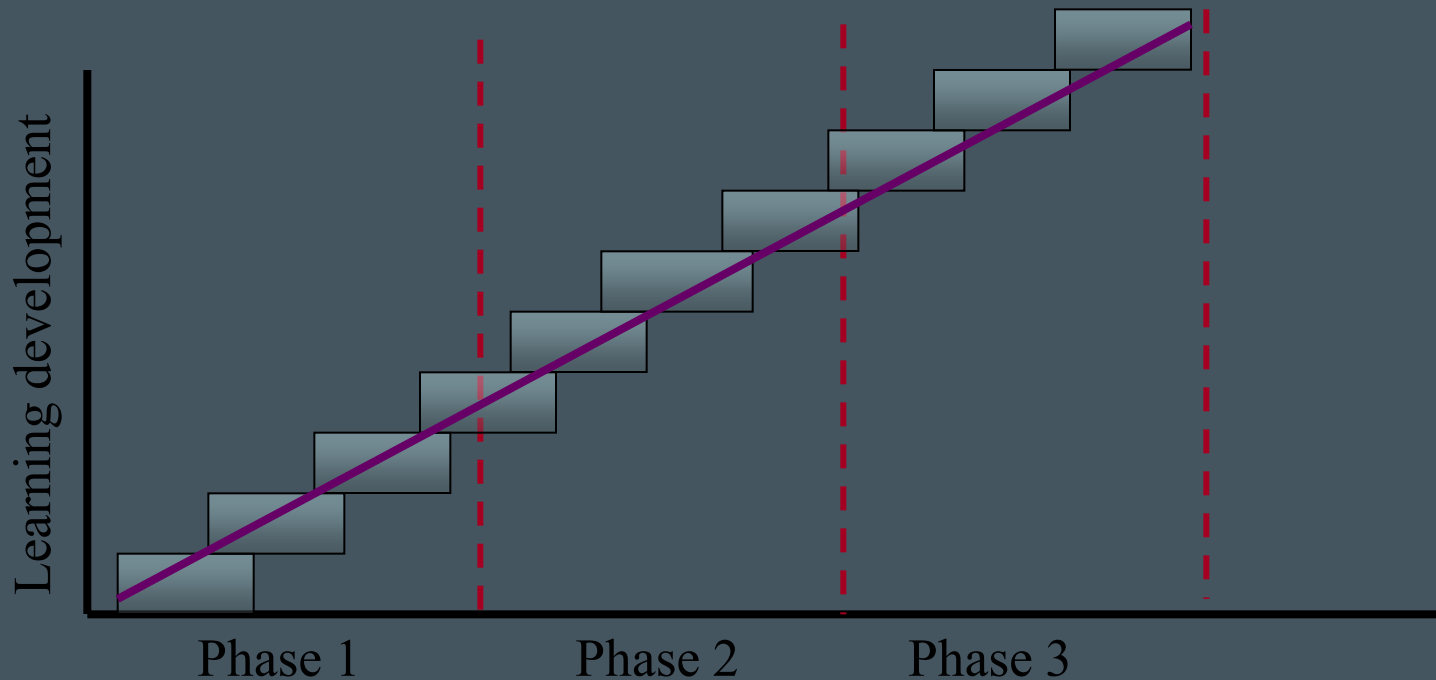
Reporting Student Transition and Retention (STAR) project  
(in 5 universities)

# *Thinking about destinations*

- Qualification +,
- Employability,
- Personal development
- Knowledge of quality,
  - Students need to understand the assessment standards and criteria to be able to self-evaluate their work *in the act of production itself* (Sadler, 1987)
- Self assessment and assessment of others
  - The ability to make informed judgements on the work of self and others is a key graduate attribute (Boud, 2009)

# *Milestones*

## Perception of a modular programme?



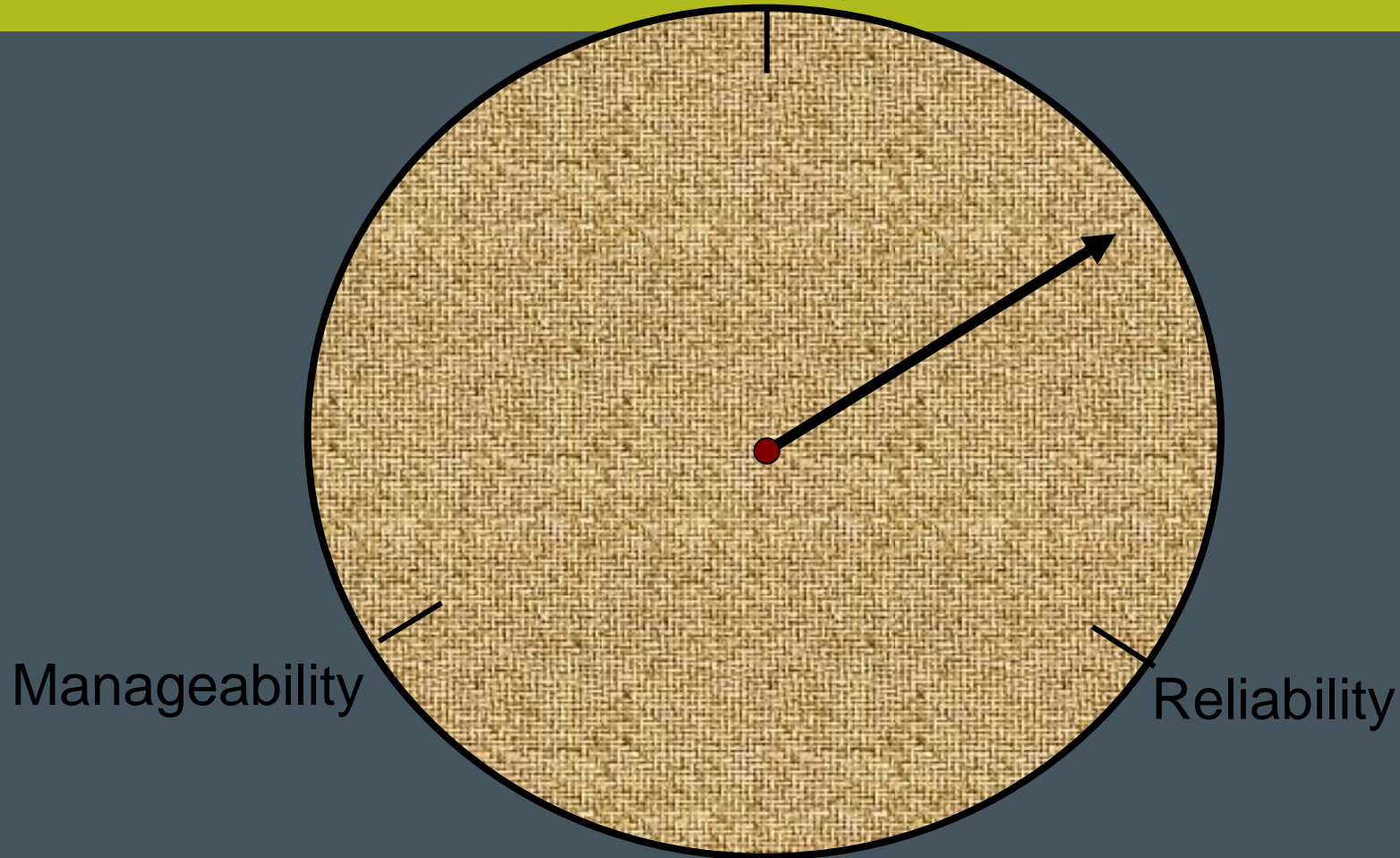
# ***Taking a programme view of assessment – some factors to bear in mind***

- Early assessment and modelling feedback use
- Effects of conflating summative and formative assessment (Price et al 2010, Black and Wiliam, 1998)
- Planning assessment to meet programme learning outcomes



# Planning assessment

Construct  
Validity



**Gordon Stobart's 'one-handed assessment clock'**

# ***Taking a programme view of assessment – some more factors to bear in mind:***

- Variety in assessment is not always a good thing

It is clear how disconcerting students find a large range of assessment activities. It is far better to limit these so students get better at using the feedback to improve performance.

(Gibbs, 2011)

Some skills, literacies, conceptual understandings are ‘slowly learnt’ and need rehearsal throughout a programme

(Yorke, 2001)

# ***Taking a programme view of assessment – even more factors to bear in mind:***

- Staff team having a programme view

Where there is a greater sense of the holistic programme, students are more likely to achieve the learning outcomes than students on programmes with a more fragmented sense of the programme

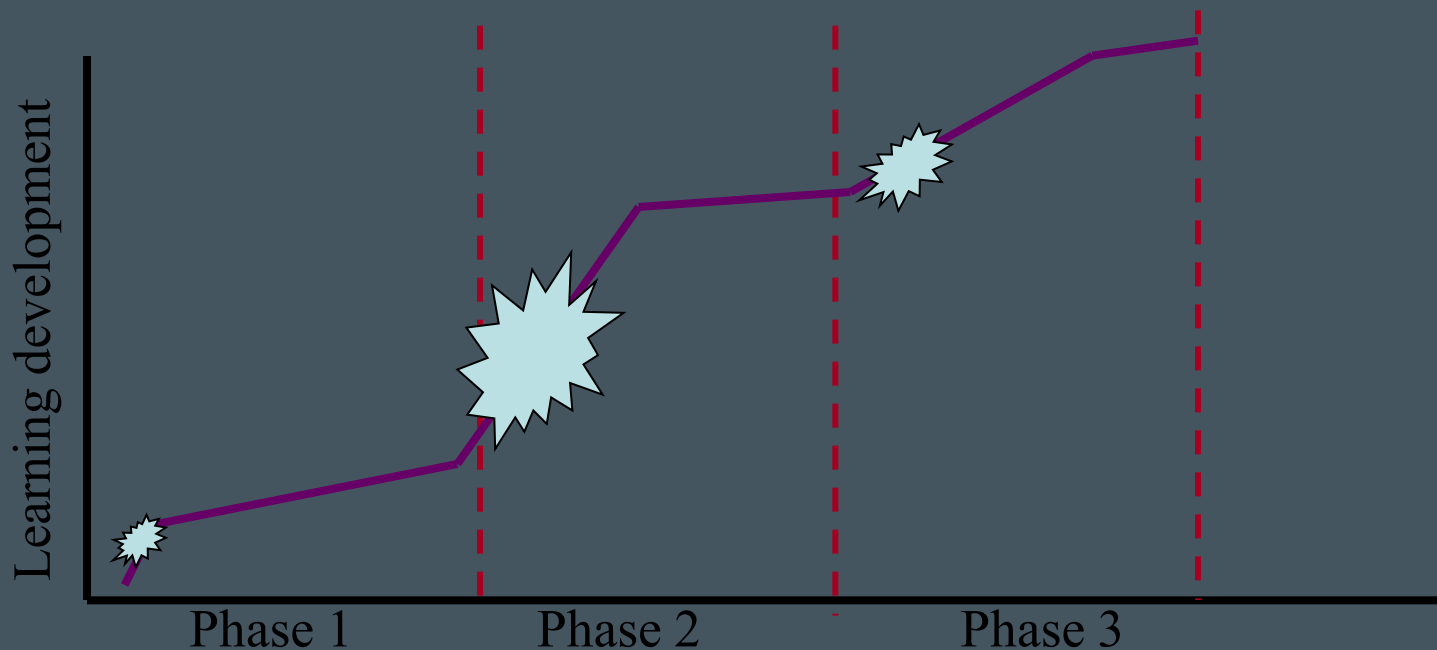
(Havnes, 2007)

- Feedback moments

# Feedback moments?

Radical movement involving zones of discomfort, '*threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge*' (Meyer and Land, 2006)

Changes in 'epistemology and knowledge structures' (Basil Bernstein in Moore et al, 2006)



# Navigation – assessment literacy

- an appreciation of assessment's relationship to learning;
- a *conceptual understanding* of assessment (i.e. understanding of the basic principles of valid assessment and feedback practice, including the terminology used);
- understanding of the nature, meaning and level of assessment criteria and standards;
- skills in self- and peer assessment;
- familiarity with *technical approaches* to assessment (i.e. familiarity with pertinent assessment and feedback skills, techniques, and methods, including their purpose and efficacy); and
- possession of the intellectual ability to select and apply appropriate approaches and techniques to assessed tasks (not only does one have the requisite skills, but one is also able to judge which skill to use when, for which task

# ***Assessment standards are difficult***

Assessment judgements rely on local, contextualised interpretations of quality underpinned by tacit understanding of 'quality' shared by members of an assessment community

(Knight, 2006)

A key issue in assessment is that students often do not understand what is a better piece of work and do not understand what is being asked of them particularly in terms of standards and criteria.

(O'Donovan et al., 2001)

# ***Assessment standards are difficult***

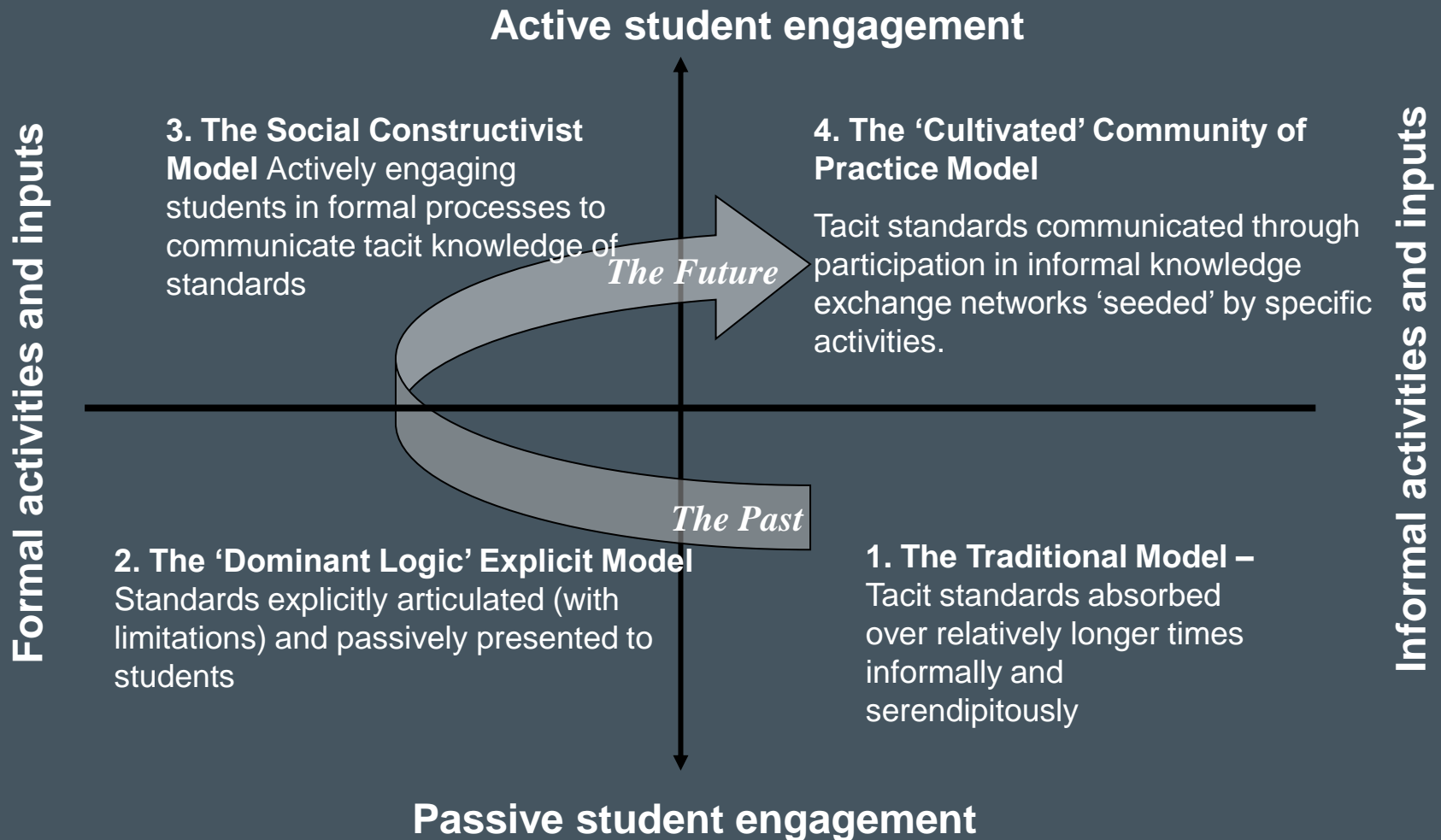
Assessors apply different interpretations of key words and phrases within written 'standards' (Saunders and Davis 1998; Ecclestone, 2001, Webster et al., 2000)

Written specifications cannot be applied mechanistically, judgement is required (Bloxham 2009)

“Standards are not conceptualised as having an existence or relevance separately from the context of the teaching team, the course as it was taught and its current students” (Sadler 2005 p190)

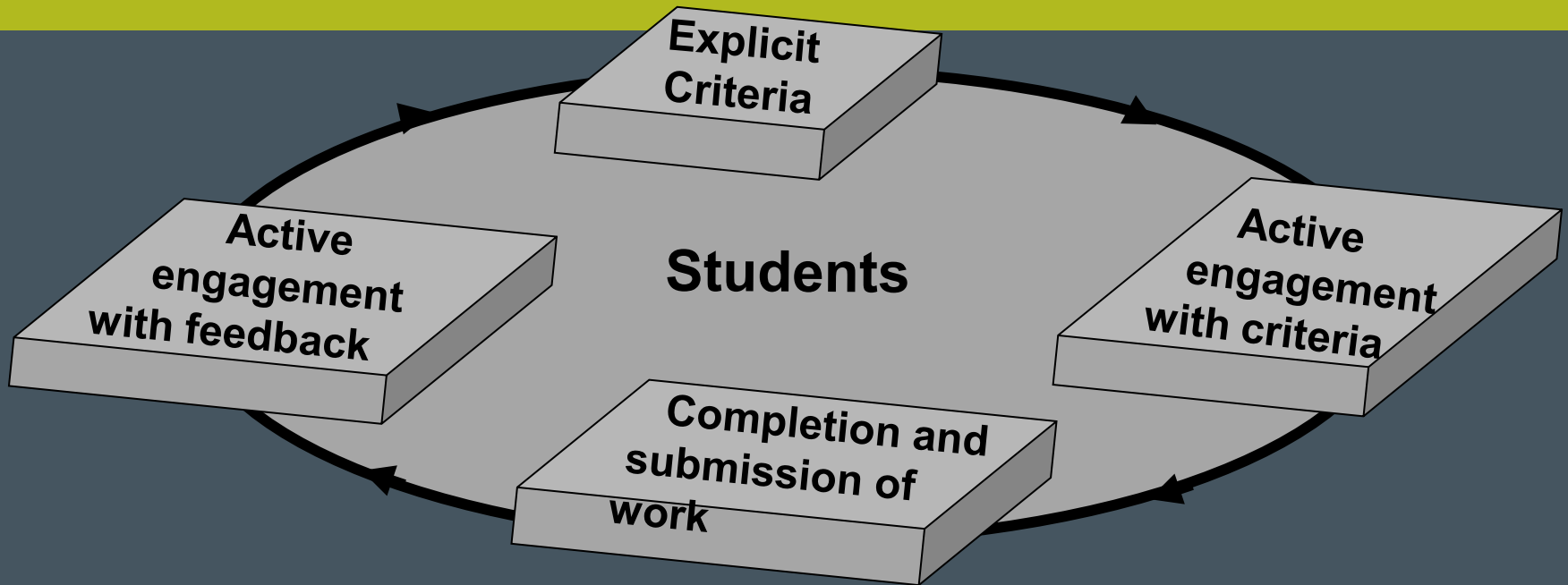
Greater precision is inherently self defeating (O'Donovan et al 2004)

# Coming to understand standards

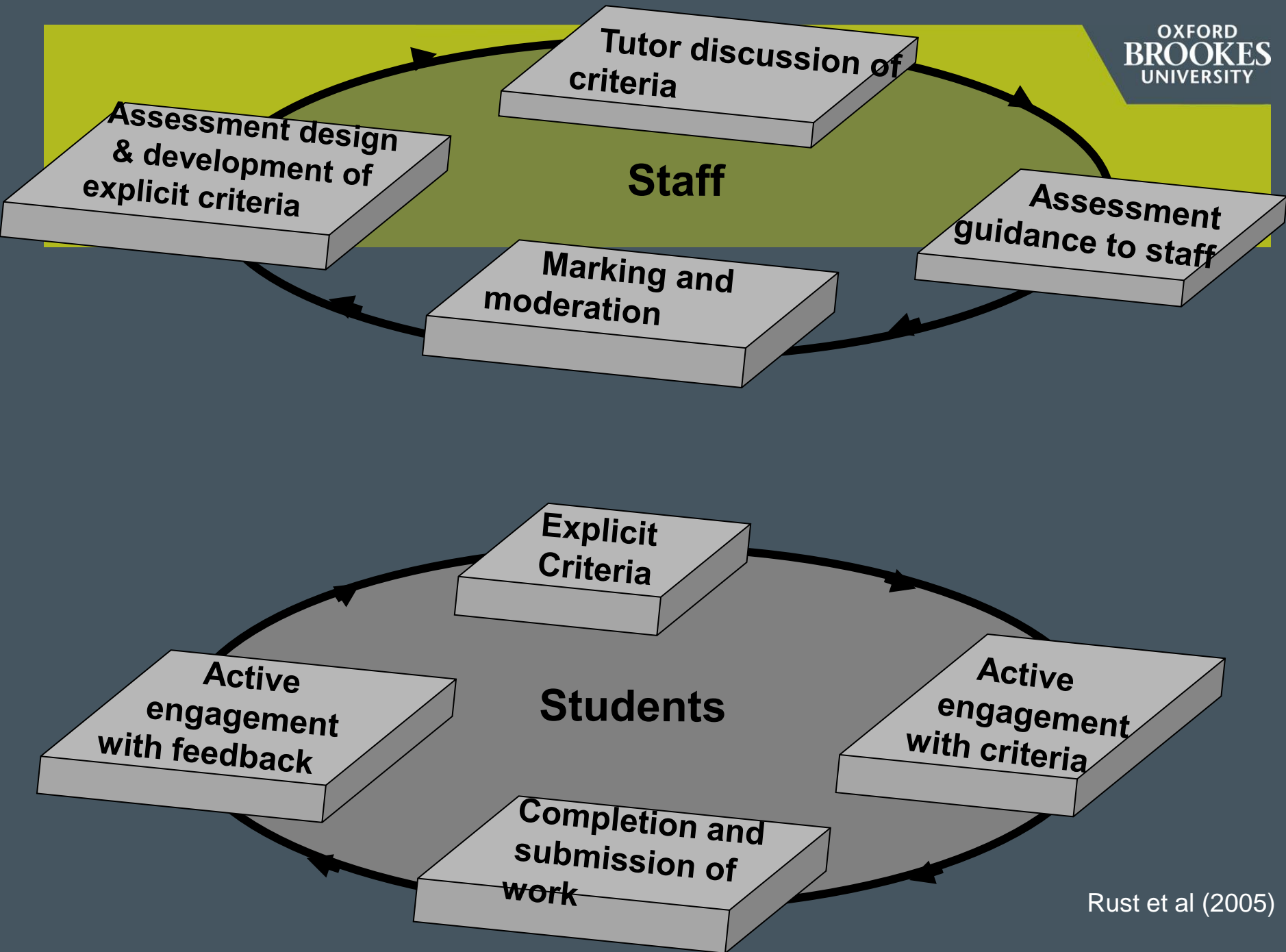




# Supporting students



Rust C., O'Donovan B. & Price M. (2005)

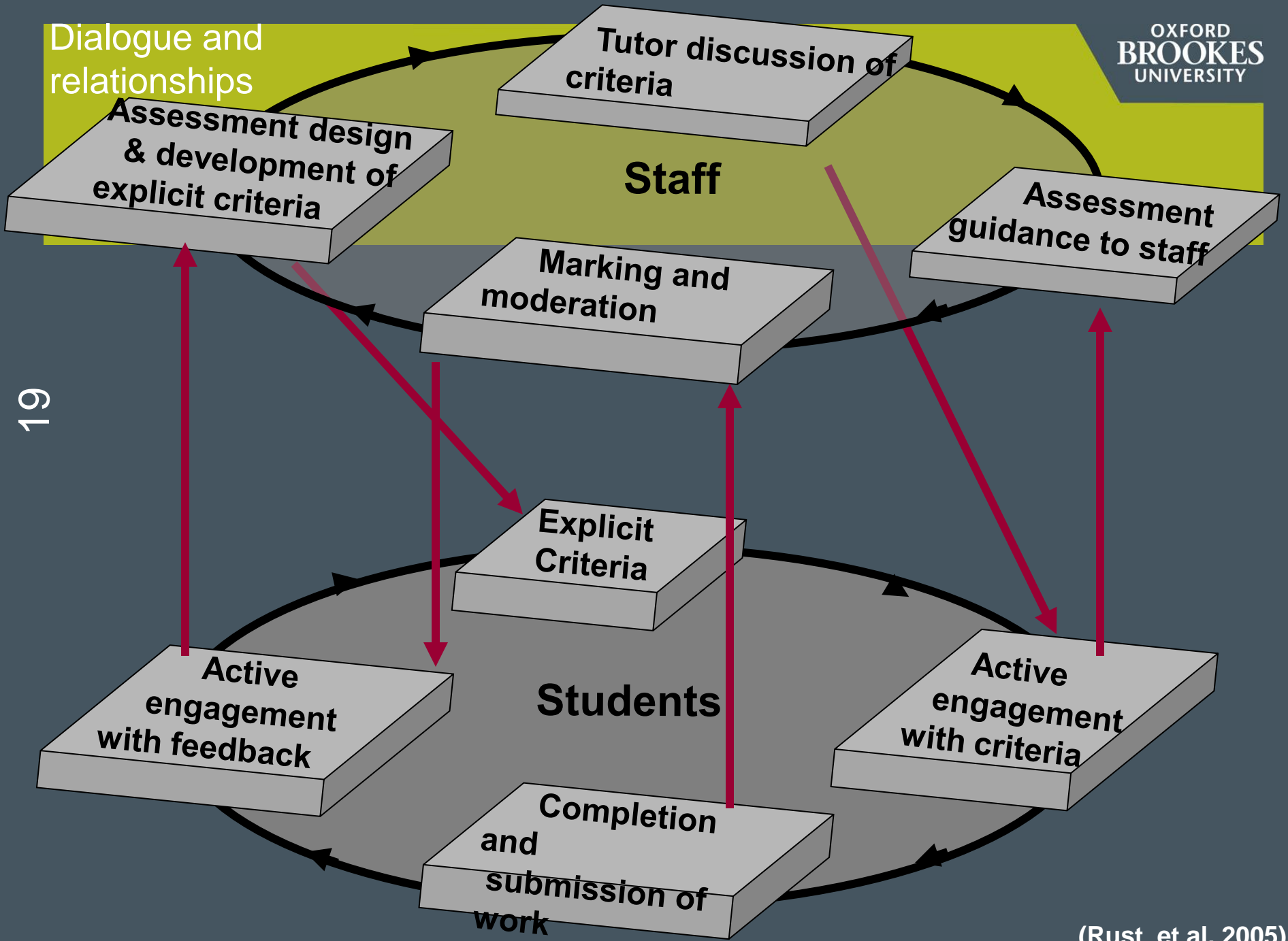


Dialogue and relationships

Staff

Students

19



# *Relationships matter*

## Findings from FDTL Engaging Students with Assessment Feedback:

### Clarity of purpose

Learning effectiveness (and student engagement) is strongly influenced by opportunity to apply feedback to future performance This relies on

- ability to understand feedback (legibility and interpretation)
- expectations of the utility of feedback
- perception of self efficacy

The relational dimension of feedback is key to student engagement

Dialogue supports understanding and engagement

(Price et al 2010)

# ***Assessment literacy***

- **Assessment confidence** (Handley et al, in press)
- **Discourse of assessment and feedback dialogue** (Price, 2005)
- **Self evaluative ability, independent learning and employability** (Boud, 2009)
- **Useful evaluation** (Price et al 2010)

# *Rethinking assessment for success*

- role of the student,
- culture of the organisation,
- control of the journey,
- signposting and clearing the route
- rules and regulations, structures, communities, allocation of resources, professional teachers.

For example: Assessment compact

Assessment Standards; Manifesto for Change; Feedback: an Agenda for Change; 123 leaflets