

## **Assessment and Feedback and Student Success**

### **The Edge Hill Toolkit**

# Assessment and Feedback and Student Success

## Introduction

### The Edge Hill Toolkit

Edge Hill University has a reputation for commitment to excellence in learning and teaching and continuous enhancement of the student experience. 'Doing things better and doing better things' is a position we have adopted so as to offer a student experience which maximises success. Getting this aspect right is a the core of our values and is also key to reputation, retention and is a central feature of the data that publically describes the university in the NSS, the proportion of good degrees, and other indicators that enter the algorithms of league tables.

Assessment and feedback which is integral to the teaching and learning experience, developmental, focussed on maximising achievement and unleashing potential presents itself as an axiom in modern higher education. Summative assessment for grading purposes alone, if not coupled with formative components, is not effective in maximising students' opportunities for success.

This toolkit is grounded in research-informed practices which are respected in the U.K. and internationally. It is based on the principle of 'self-evaluation and review' where colleagues in departments/areas can convene with the tools to identify what they do well (and there is a great deal of excellent practice at Edge Hill) and what they may focus on for improvement by adapting and adapting approaches from the resources in the appendices. The tools also provide the basis from which to harvest good practice for sharing and also to identify support that may be required from within the facilities or from the Centre for Learning and Teaching and Learning Services.

The Toolkit is focussed on enhancement of the following aspects of the student experience:

- Assessment
- Feedback
- Increasing of the proportion of 'Good Degrees' without artificial grade inflation.

The package is organise into three sections which focus on:

- a) Good Practice in Assessment for Learning and Student Success
- b) Good Practice in feedback for Learning and Student Success
- c) Strategies and Interventions to maximise the preparation of good degrees

## Enhancing Assessment and Feedback: Reflection Tool

Universities in the U.K. and internationally are increasingly to the notion Assessment for Learning (A4L). There is a lot excellent practice in this University<sup>7</sup> and we wish to use that as a basis for enhancement and sharing of ideas. It could be argued that there is an '*Edge Hill Way*' emerging in relation to A4L and Assessment Literacy. This has at its heart:

- students understanding the principles of assessment and feedback that we subscribe to
- students experiencing these 'in action' in their own experiences of being assessed (Modelling) discussing and reflecting (Metacognition)
- students practicing assessing examples of work (so that mental Scaffolds are well formed)
- students using these principles in their own teaching practices
- mutual understanding of the potential A4L and a culture of creativity and development in this area.

These core components broadly align with the principles of A4L and Feedback (SENLEF - Student Enhanced Learning through Effective Formative Feedback)

A4L should:

1. Have continuous, developmental, formative components and be part of planning for everyday classroom teaching
2. Make learner learners and teachers focus on 'how' learning is happening and not only 'what' has been learned (A4L + A of L)
3. Contain tasks and questions that prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills enabling teachers to be diagnostic and adjust their teaching accordingly
4. Be central to teacher training and development and include A4L and skills of giving feedback
5. Should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact
6. Should take account of the importance of learner motivation
7. Should promote involve learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed
8. Should involve constructive guidance about how to improve
9. Should help develop the learner's capacity for self-assessment so that they can become reflective and self-managing
10. Enable all learners to achieve their best and to have their efforts recognised

Effective Feedback (SENLEF):

1. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning as part of personal development processes?
2. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning?

3. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards)?
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance?
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning?
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem?
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching

We will use the **Reflection Tools** below as an important contribution to the '*Edge Hill Way*' and to our sustaining the characteristics of outstanding practice. It is intended that each area engages with the tool so as to:

- Reflect on current good practices and identify creative approaches that can be disseminated within the faculty and beyond
- Identify gaps and areas for development and mutual support
- Confirm and further articulate the '*Edge Hill Way*' of assessment.

The first **Reflection Tools** integrate the following foci, derived in the main from the above, so as to stimulate dialogue and development:

- principles of Assessment and Feedback and how we enact them in day to day
- formative experiences and preparation of students for assessment
- making links between assessment and outstanding classroom practices
- identification of good practice for sharing within reflection on '*why*' they are effective in terms of student learning (evidence for practice that works)

It also asks you to reflect upon and share examples of strategies for making assessment and feedback principles workable.

### **Process**

You are asked to engage with the **Reflection Tools** over the next 2 months and to then submit a completed version for receipt by the Faculty of Learning and Teaching Committee. The Senior Learning and Teaching Fellow and Associate Dean will oversee the process and use the outcomes to design for dissemination and the construction of an overall narrative which will attempt capture our '*Edge Hill Way*' and examples of how we deliver on it. This can be used to contribute to how we communicate our work to students and other stakeholders and in promotion of our reputation outside of the University.

Your engagement with this Tool may be helpfully preceded by considering the appended materials which are a rich source of practical strategies that have an effective track record of making a difference to student success and performance.

## Reflection Tool A: Assessment and Feedback

### Addressing Assessment literacy

- 'Assessment confidence' (Price et al, 2012). (If students know how it works, they are more likely to succeed)
- 'Discourse of assessment and feedback dialogue' (Price, 2005). (Tutors showing examples of work and talking about how they assess and then discussing this with the students)
- 'Self-evaluative ability, independent learning and employability' (Boud, 2009) (Students, through a better understanding of assessment and feedback, can take more charge and know more about their strengths and areas for development)
- 'Useful evaluation' (Price et al 2010). (Feedback is key: they understand why they got the mark and how to improve).

Please see the questions and challenges below which are aimed at stimulating debate and development as described above.

## Reflection Tool A

Aspects of Assessment Literacy	What do you do currently in relation to this aspect that works? Why is it effective?	Is any of your practice creative and worthy of dissemination? If so why is it so?	What aspects do you think you could give greater focus?	What aspects you would like to develop further and is there any support you need?
'Assessment confidence' (Price et al, 2012). (If students know how it works, they are more likely to succeed)				
'Discourse of assessment and feedback dialogue' (Price, 2005). (Tutors showing examples of work and talking about how they assess and then discussing this with the students)				
'Self-evaluative ability, independent learning and employability' (Boud, 2009) (Students, through a better understanding of assessment and feedback, can take more charge and know more about their strengths and areas for development)				
'Useful evaluation' (Price et al 2010). (Feedback is key: they understand why they got the mark and how to improve).				

**Enhancing Assessment and Feedback Practices: Some Challenges**

<b>Assessment Challenges</b>	<b>What do you do currently in relation to this aspect that works? Why is it effective?</b>	<b>Is any of your practice creative and worthy of dissemination? If so why is it so?</b>	<b>What aspects do you think you could give greater focus?</b>	<b>What aspects you would like to develop further and is there any support you need?</b>
How are Formative Assessment Experiences being used?				
Are there opportunities for students to practice types of assessment? How is this managed?				
How are students prepared to write in the style of the discipline for assessment?				
How do you get students to understand how assessment works and how marks will be awarded?				
Does teaching observation pay attention to assessment practices? Is there any reason why it couldn't?				

Do students understand and engage with feedback? What can you do you do to ensure students engage with and act on it?				
If you have exams, how do you give feedback to students?				
What do you do to make assessment interesting, engaging and motivating?				
How is assessment used to promote development of outstanding practice?				
How are students taught about A4I? How can you get them to understand their own assessment in relation to A4L?				
What strategies do you have to make assessment workable and less labour intensive than it can become?				
What are students saying about their experiences of assessment?				



## Reflection Tool B

How good is Feedback to students? Key Questions one may ask in reflection and discussions (which equally apply to text based and oral feedback modes)

Feedback Challenges	What do you do currently in relation to this aspect that works and why is it effective?	Is any of your practice creative and worthy of dissemination? If so why is it so?	What aspects do you think you could give greater focus?	What aspects you would like to develop further and is there any support you need?
<b>To what extent does the Feedback recognise what has been learned in reference to what was expected in the assessment task? Does it:</b>				
Relate to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria you have used to make your judgements?				
Clearly communicate why the marks were awarded so that students understand how you have used grading criteria?				
Identify areas of strengths and also have positive dimensions in addition to (d) below?				
Point out weaknesses and areas for development				
Indicate ways forward including sign-posting to				

resources, online links or further support?				
Have a tone which is honest yet respectful?				
<b>In addition, specifically in relation to the NSS and Feedback, how may we help students better understand that giving and getting feedback is also part of what we do when we:</b>				
Ask questions in class and respond and guide?				
Undertake formative assessment activities?				
Have students peer review their work and practices?				
Undertake mid-module reviews, read and respond to module evaluations, talk with student representatives, consultative fora etc?				
Mentor and observe in practice/work places?				
Return written feedback in four weeks (which is 'timely' in relation to] policy and general practice in the sector)?				

# Appendix for Tools A and B

## Some Thoughts about Assessment for Success

**Assessment and Feedback: The Route to Success (after Margaret Price, Oxford Brookes University at Edge Hill University, June 2012)**

**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.”*

Times Higher, 24/1/03. Reporting Student Transition and Retention (STAR) project  
(in 5 universities)

### **Students need a knowledge of what quality is**

- 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)

### **We should take 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
- 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)

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)

### **Students need to be able to navigate assessment and know how it works and what it is for and their and our responsibilities**

- 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)

(Price et al, in print)

Assessment standards are difficult for students to understand.

“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)

### **Clarity of purpose – understanding feedback**

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

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)

### **Some Thoughts about Formative Experiences and Preparation for Success in Assessment**

Formative experiences are about deliberate teaching for understanding of what assessment is, what it is for and how it works. This includes focus on explaining and showing the use of ILOs, criteria and ensuring students know and understand what feedback is all about. Working with real, meaningful, examples, with useful ideas and content in the discipline is the primary vehicle to achieve this. In this section you are required to explain and specify deliberate plans for formative experiences in the award. You may present this as a grid or chart for each/year section of the award. Preparation for First Year students, or those returning to study (postgraduate) after a significant gap should be given particular attention. You are also expected to consider this in the Learning and Teaching sections of any new module templates that have been included in the award.

### **Unpacking ‘Formative’ Experiences prior to Summative Assessment**

- All assessment can be considered to have formative elements if the very act of doing it is linked to developing one’s application and integration of knowledge and ideas
- This is even more formative if it is coupled with excellent, developmental, feedback
- Formative assessment is done in rehearsal and preparation for summative assessment (‘that informs marks and classes’) It is a key element of the notion of ‘assessment for learning’ e,g having a go at an assessment and getting some feedback or an indicative mark to help you see how you are doing
- **‘Formative experiences’** are where the real added value to the student experience is at (and these can include formative assessment)
- Formative experiences include many of the expectations of the Undergraduate Postgraduate Frameworks
- Formative experiences are about deliberate teaching for understanding of what assessment is, what it is for and how it works. This includes focus on explaining and showing the use of learning outcomes, criteria and what feedback is all about. Working with real, meaningful, examples, with useful ideas and content in the discipline is the way forward
- Formative experiences through explanation and exemplification can include:
  - Modelling, writing in front of students (showing and explaining how good writing works ‘in action’)
  - Showing pieces of written work and describing its qualities (e.g. text projected up and annotated with comment bubbles and track changes .... In action)

- Marking it and explaining how the criteria work and writing the feedback one would give (on screen as above)
- Getting students to mark using criteria and to write feedback and talk about it

Such approaches can be similar for all types of assessment, not just writing.

So,

- Assessment is important as it measures student success. Formative preparation is thus important
- If assessment is understood, students can be more successful
- Formative experiences are important
- They are more sophisticated than just getting feedback on a draft or a practice attempt.

**Experiences of Feedback on Assessment: Case Study (Mark Schofield - schom@edgehill.ac.uk)**

**Theoretical Frame for Case Study:**

**Modelling:**

- Students **see** writing in action
- Students **see** assessment in action (ILOs, Criteria)
- Students see construction of feedback in action
- Students talk and discuss **during and after action!** (Metacognitive dialogues)
- Explicitness begins to **scaffold** and help schema formation (students start to get how it works)

**Joint Construction:**

- Students **practice** writing together
- Students **practice** assessing together
- Students **practice** writing and giving feedback and explore roles and responsibilities together
- Students talk and discuss **during and after action!** (Metacognitive dialogues together)
- Explicitness further **scaffolds** and helps firmer schema formation (students start to understand it **together** and how it works even more)

**Independence (Empowered):**

- Students **practice** – do formative tasks and get feedback **individually** (from tutors and peers)
- Students can **review** ILOs, criteria and criteria for the summative task (they understand how it works)
- Students do their **summative** assessment and are more likely to succeed and carry forward skills

## **What was the process?**

The Skills for Personal Learning Module has a focus on helping students to understand assessment and feedback processes prior to submission of their first piece of summative assessment in year 1.

A number of teaching strategies are deployed in sequence including:

- Teacher modelling of production of short pieces of writing, emphasising the structure of argument, referencing conventions, ‘beginnings’ ‘middles’ and ‘conclusions’ using the subject matter as a vehicle.
- Teacher modelling their thinking whilst reading pieces of students work on screen, and talking about how they judge quality in relation to the learning outcomes and grading criteria and actively writing feedback as they go along
- Students in groups assessing three pieces of work of varied quality, considering learning outcomes and grading criteria and writing feedback for each. They then compare across groups and engage in dialogue with the tutor, rather like a practice ‘moderation’ session.
- Students share their thoughts so far and reflect on roles and responsibilities in relation to feedback and what makes for good production and use of feedback to enhance learning.
- Students jointly construct short pieces and consider feeding back against grading criteria across their groups.
- Students then construct a piece of writing related to a hot ‘interest’ topic in their subject and the tutor writes formative feedback which they discuss in peer groups and in small group tutorials with the tutor.
- Students, after engaging with this journey, finally write their assignment for summative assessment.

## **Reflection on why worked**

The tutor felt that he had been more explicit than ever in explaining how he assesses and writes feedback. Students were more receptive to these processes than statements of intent and descriptions in module handbook (which students don’t always pay attention to, or just ‘don’t get’) as they can be relatively inert documents.

Students reported that this was an extremely helpful process of ‘easing them in to real assessment where marks are awarded’. Indeed, seeing writing and assessment and feedback being produced in action, gave them clearer insights into what the purposes of feedback were and what was expected of them through a ‘no secrets’ approach. The activities also served to get a sense of mutual support and community going in the group. Students have subsequently reported how reflections on the experiences in the module set them up well for subsequent modules and their success. The felt encouraged to engage more actively with feedback and with tutors.

## Reflections and recommendations

- The sequence of modelling by tutors and assessment practice events by students, it is argued, may be transferable to other subjects.
- Similar approaches could be built into induction activities as a matter of course.
- Second year students could be used to contribute to such induction activities.
- After the summative assessment event, general feedback to the whole group (like a mini-examiners report) could be submitted to the group via e-mail or the VLE. If feasible, this could be passed to the tutor/s who are to teach the group next. As such, this would extend the process of academic induction longitudinally.

## How to make your feedback work

### 1. Preparing students to receive feedback

Points to consider:

- Students need an appreciation of assessment's relationship to learning otherwise it is not worth doing.
- 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 (Haynes, 2007). (It is good to explain to students where the module and its assessment fit and why it is important in the overall scheme of things).

For example:

- Align the students' expectations with yours by explaining the purpose of feedback and you 'marking' and thinking out loud with examples of work on a screen.
- Use previously marked assignments to show how feedback was used to improve the quality of later submissions.
- Ask students to submit brief evaluations of their work along with their assignments.
- Let them have a go at assessing pieces of work against the criteria, awarding marks, writing feedback and discussing the process.

### 2. Reducing emphasis on written feedback

Points to consider:

- Some skills, literacies, conceptual understandings are 'slowly learnt' and need rehearsal throughout a programme. (Yorke, 2001) (i.e. Practise! Examples!)
- Dialogue supports understanding and engagement (Price et al 2010). (i.e. look at examples of work and feedback and discuss how it all joins up).

For example:

Student engagement is enhanced if written feedback is supplemented with dialogue such as in-class discussions of exemplars and peer review discussions or discussion of feedback with a personal tutor.



### 3. Providing timely feedback

Points to consider:

“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.” (Times Higher, 24/1/03) *Reporting Student Transition and Retention (STAR) project (in 5 universities)*

For example:

- Consider early ‘writing’ as a diagnostic tool
- Clearly communicate the process, demands, structure, functions and timing of assessment
- Consider giving generic feedback to a whole group as soon as a general picture emerges of the quality of assignments.

### **Students: Getting the best out of feedback**

#### **1. Getting students ready for feedback**

Points to consider:

- Clarify expectations - be clear what feedback is for and what the students’ responsibilities. Show them examples.
- Engender good study habits; diagnose areas of individual difficulty; promote engagement. As in the above, let students see how it all works. If there are no secrets, they ‘get it’ and can perform better.

A key issue in feedback is that students often do not understand what a better piece of work is **and** when students do not understand what is being asked of them particularly in terms of standards and criteria. (O’Donovan et al., 2001)

Students need to find out what sort of feedback they will receive; Written, Verbal or online and who will give feedback and when.

#### **2. Understanding feedback**

Points to consider:

- 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)
- They need 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 is important. In other words, seeing examples lets students into the ‘secret’.

For example:

Students should be actively encouraged to read or listen carefully to feedback and how it applies to their work or ideas and how it relates to the assessment criteria. They should expect and be expected to ask for any clarification as they cannot use feedback they don't understand!

### **3. Using your feedback**

Points to consider:

- The ability to make informed judgements on the work is a key graduate attribute. (Boud, 2009)
- Learning effectiveness (and student engagement) is strongly influenced by opportunity to apply feedback to future performance. Is feedback uniformly developmental, even for the best students?

This relies on:

- ability to understand feedback (legibility and interpretation)
- expectations of how feedback will be used
- perception of self-efficacy – do the students understand enough to know they can do even better?

For example students can use feedback:

- To think about what has been done well and what can be improved
- To plan subsequent pieces of work
- To prepare work in other modules
- To develop subject knowledge
- To prepare for personal and/or tutorials.

### **Some Helpful Thoughts and Reflections on Real Practice at the Front Line about Formative Experiences and Preparation for Success in Assessment:**

Formative experiences are about the deliberate teaching for understanding of what assessment is, what it is for, and how it works. This includes a significant focus on explaining and showing the use of Intended Learning Outcomes, criteria and ensuring students know and understand what feedback is all about. Working with real, meaningful, examples, containing useful ideas and content in the discipline is the primary vehicle to achieve this.

The best practice is to specify deliberate plans for formative experiences in the programme or module you design. You may present this as a grid or chart. Preparation for first year students, or those returning to study (or postgraduate) after a significant gap should be given particular attention. You could also consider this in the learning and teaching sections of any new module templates that have been included in the award.

### **Unpacking ‘Formative’ Experiences prior to Summative Assessment:**

- All assessment can be considered to have formative elements if the very act of doing it is linked to developing one’s application and integration of knowledge and ideas. This is particularly true if a student is building on feedback from the last assessments.
- This is even more formative if it is coupled with excellent, developmental, feedback along the way. Perhaps through discussion of plans, structures and drafts.
- Formative assessment is done in rehearsal and preparation for summative assessment (‘that informs marks and classes’) It is a key element of the notion of ‘assessment for learning’ e.g. having a go at an assessment and getting some feedback or an indicative mark to help you see how one is doing.
- ‘Formative experiences’ are where the real added value to the student experience is at (and these can include formative assessment).
- Formative experiences include many of the expectations of the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Frameworks at Edge Hill University.
- Formative experiences are about deliberate teaching for understanding of what assessment is, what it is for and how it works. This includes focus on explaining and showing the use of learning outcomes, criteria and focus on what feedback is all about. Working with real, meaningful, examples, with useful ideas and content in the discipline is the way forward.

### **Formative experiences through explanation and exemplification can include:**

- Modelling, writing in front of students (showing and explaining how good writing works ‘in action’).
- Showing pieces of written work and describing its qualities (e.g. text projected up and annotated with comment bubbles and track changes).
- Marking it and explaining how the criteria work and writing the feedback one would give.
- Getting students to mark using criteria and to write feedback and talk about it.

Such approaches can be similar for all types of assessment, not just writing. So, in conclusion:

- Assessment is important as it measures student success. Formative preparation is important.
- If assessment is understood, students can be more successful.
- Formative experiences are important as they are more sophisticated than just getting feedback on a draft or a practice attempt.

The following links the Undergraduate and Postgraduate wiki will prove helpful:

<https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/wiki/display/ufr/TLA+Resources>

[Practical Case Studies from Staff and Students - Making Assessment and Feedback Work](#)

[MESA Case Studies - Assessment for Learning](#)

[Experiences of Feedback on Assessment: Modelling and Scaffolding](#)

[Assessment Audit Tool](#)

[SENLEF Seven Principles](#)

[Assessment for Learning - 10 Principles](#)

[Awarding Marks of 39, 49, 59, 69 and Key questions of 70%](#)

[Formative Assessment](#) - Dr Chris Beaumont, Edge Hill University

[Rethinking Formative Assessment in HE: a theoretical model and seven principles of good practice feedback](#)

Higher Education Academy Assessment Resources

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assessment>

[ASKe CETL – Oxford Brookes](#)

Suggested Reading

Boud, D. (2009). How can practice reshape assessment? In Joughin, G. (Ed.) *Assessment, Learning and Judgement in Higher Education*. Dordrecht: Springer

Handley, K. (2012) Learning to mark: exemplars, dialogue and participation in assessment communities. *Higher Education Research and Development*, January.

Haynes, S. N. & Kaholokula, J.K. (2007). Behavioural assessment. In: Hersen and A. M. Gross Handbook of Clinical Psychology (495-524). New York: John Wiley

O'Donovan, B. (2008) Developing Student Understanding of Assessment Methods: a nested hierarchy of approaches. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 9 (3) 325-35

Price, M (2011) Feedback: All that Effort but what is the Effect? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 35(3), 277-89

Price, M. (2012) *Assessment Literacy: The Foundation for Improving Student Learning*, Wheatley, Oxford Brookes University.

Sadler, D. R. (1987) *Specifying and promulgating achievement standards*, *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, 191–209.

Yorke, M. (2001) Formative Assessment and its Relevance to Retention. *Higher Education Research and Development* 20(2), 115-26

Centre for Learning and Teaching, Edge Hill University: Some Helpful Thoughts about Assessment for Success

## **Reflection Tool C - A University Challenge - Increasing the Proportion of Good Degrees: 'A Starter for 10'**

### **'Support and Challenge'**

It is very likely that students are performing to their maximum potential if they are well taught and attention is paid to the principles of assessment for learning and feedback explored in the previous tools. The following adds focus to the notion of enhancement of the profile of good degrees without sacrificing academic standards or artificially inflating grades.

The translation of the questions into the self-evaluation and review tool should support further development and enhancement of this aspect of the student experience and its focus on success which we all subscribe to.

## Self-Evaluation and Review/Reflection on the Degree Classification Profile

Key Questions of 'Profiles' of good degrees and accessibility of the award of marks of 70% and above

Question	Response (including practices worthy of dissemination)	Action to be taken	Any support needs
Do you have grading criteria for marks above 70% for each level? If not why not?			
If so, are they clear enough to enable you to make judgements of 75, 80, 85, 90, 95 and 100%?			
Are markers using the full range of marks? If not why not?			
Are you moderating students' work/marking as a team and discussing ways to improve teaching and assessment across the board?			

<p>Is caution taken when aggregating marks from assessment components within a module, particularly when collating to near threshold of e.g. 39%, 59%, 69% at grade boundaries. Essentially, markers should be satisfied that, <u>overall</u>, the student has achieved the learning outcomes at the pass threshold, or for the award of the appropriate class. Is step marking an inconceivable possibility given the lack of precision in distinguishing by 1 mark within a class?</p>			
<p>Is the award of such a mark should be coupled with feedback that clearly indicates why the mark was awarded in alignment with the</p>			

<p><b>criteria assigned to that class?</b></p>			
<p><b>Do moderation processes consider borderline marks and all 'fails' as a matter of course?</b></p>			
<p><b>Given the potential imprecision of aggregation at the 1% margin ( for all 39, 49, 59 and 69 marks awarded) is the question asked should always address whether or not the final mark is indeed in the correct class and not simply the result of a calculation in aggregating of marks and appropriate discretion is required? If the markers feel that the learning outcomes have been achieved at the higher grade boundary are they advised to award the</b></p>			



<p><b>mark accordingly? Is this at the core of moderation?</b></p>			
<p><b>Do you have a way of judging if you are awarding a low frequency of 2:1s and 1sts cf the nature of your student intake? What is the intake output data? How does it compare with other departments/areas with similar intake point averages? How does it compare with similar programmes in the sector? What trends are thee in your data over time?</b></p>			
<p><b>Do you have a way of judging if you are awarding a low frequency of 2:1s and 1sts cf the nature of your student intake? What is the intake output data? How does it compare with other</b></p>			

<p>departments/areas with similar intake point averages? How does it compare with similar programmes in the sector? What trends are there in your data over time?</p>			
<p>Are students encouraged to be strategic re their degree classifications? Do they understand exit velocity?</p>			
<p>Do you award a lot of marks of 39, 49, 59, 69? If so, why might this be so?</p>			
<p>Does feedback on a 70% allow a student to know what they would need to do to get 100%?</p>			
<p>How do you deal with any instances of modules (and markers) with classification profiles</p>			

which are 'outliers' ... 'hot'?			
Do staff have anxieties about awarding high marks? If so what are they?			
Does feedback routinely support students to get a higher grade next time with practical strategies, reference to resources and tutorial advice? Do you actively encourage students to be strategic re their marks and exit velocity calculations?			
Is the feedback to groups offered after exams routinely improving performances at the grade boundaries?			
Is feedback explicit enough to show why the mark was awarded and			

<p><b>specifically what would need to be done to move up a grade next time? Does feedback encourage students to raise their game and be instrumental? Do such conversations appear in personal tutorials for individuals and or groups?</b></p>			
<p><b>Is attention paid to the increasing demands of the complexity of work and assessment as students move from level to level/year to year? Will they see new examples of work at their new level?</b></p>			
<p><b>Do students understand grading criteria and how they are used in assessment? How do they know what firm 2:1 and 1<sup>st</sup> class</b></p>			

<p><b>honours pieces of assessed work look alike? Have they seen examples at all levels?</b></p>			
<p><b>Are students engaged in any peer support re assessment with a particular focus on improving their degree classification?</b></p>			
<p><b>Are students at the cusp of all classifications boundaries identified and coached in any way?</b></p>			
<p><b>Are students having opportunities to see examples of work at the grade boundaries with guidance on how they could be improved to move into the next class?</b></p>			
<p><b>Do students understand and engage with the exit velocity and APM</b></p>			

<b>calculations and the regulations for awards?</b>			
<b>What other practical ideas and strategies do you have to improve the profile of good degrees?</b>			

## **Appendix: Data on profiles of good degrees from Academic Board**

### **Initial Comparison of Degree Classification with Entry Tariff Rate for Undergraduate First-degree Students Graduating in 2012/13**

#### Overview:

The report presents internal data relating the degree classifications for full time undergraduate first-degree students graduating in 2012/13 to their associated entry tariffs by faculty and department. Data is presented for HEFCE, NCTL and SHA monitored programmes. The data set for Edge Hill University students has been compiled by identifying individual students who graduated in 2012/13 and mapping this to entry tariff data. It should be noted that the majority of these students entered their programme of study in 2010/11. The HEFCE AAB+ policy was not in place for the intake in question and thus admissions tariff data sets collected were not subject to the degree of scrutiny introduced in line with the new policy. As a result, the data set will be comprehensive but not complete; in particular, some entry qualifications relating to older students, particularly BTEC qualifications, may be missing.

Comparator data is presented for the University's competitor group. Individual data is not available. The data is drawn from the HESA published statistics and relates exit awards for the 2012/13 cohort with entry tariffs for 2010/11. The data presented relates to full and part time undergraduate first-degree students and whilst the majority of full time students would have taken three years to complete their undergraduate programme of study, others would have varying timescales. Thus, the data set cannot be used as a direct comparator with the Edge Hill internal data.

The report includes:

- Chart showing the entry tariff data and percentage of good honours degrees for 2012/13 Edge Hill full-time first-degree undergraduate students by faculty and programme.
- Chart showing the 2010/11 entry tariff data and percentage of good honours degrees for 2012/13 all first-degree undergraduate students by institution.
- Distribution of Tariff Points by Department for the Faculty of Arts & Sciences
- An associated excel spreadsheet holding the base data set showing tariff and degree classification bands for internal and competitor data.

Programme level data is available by request.

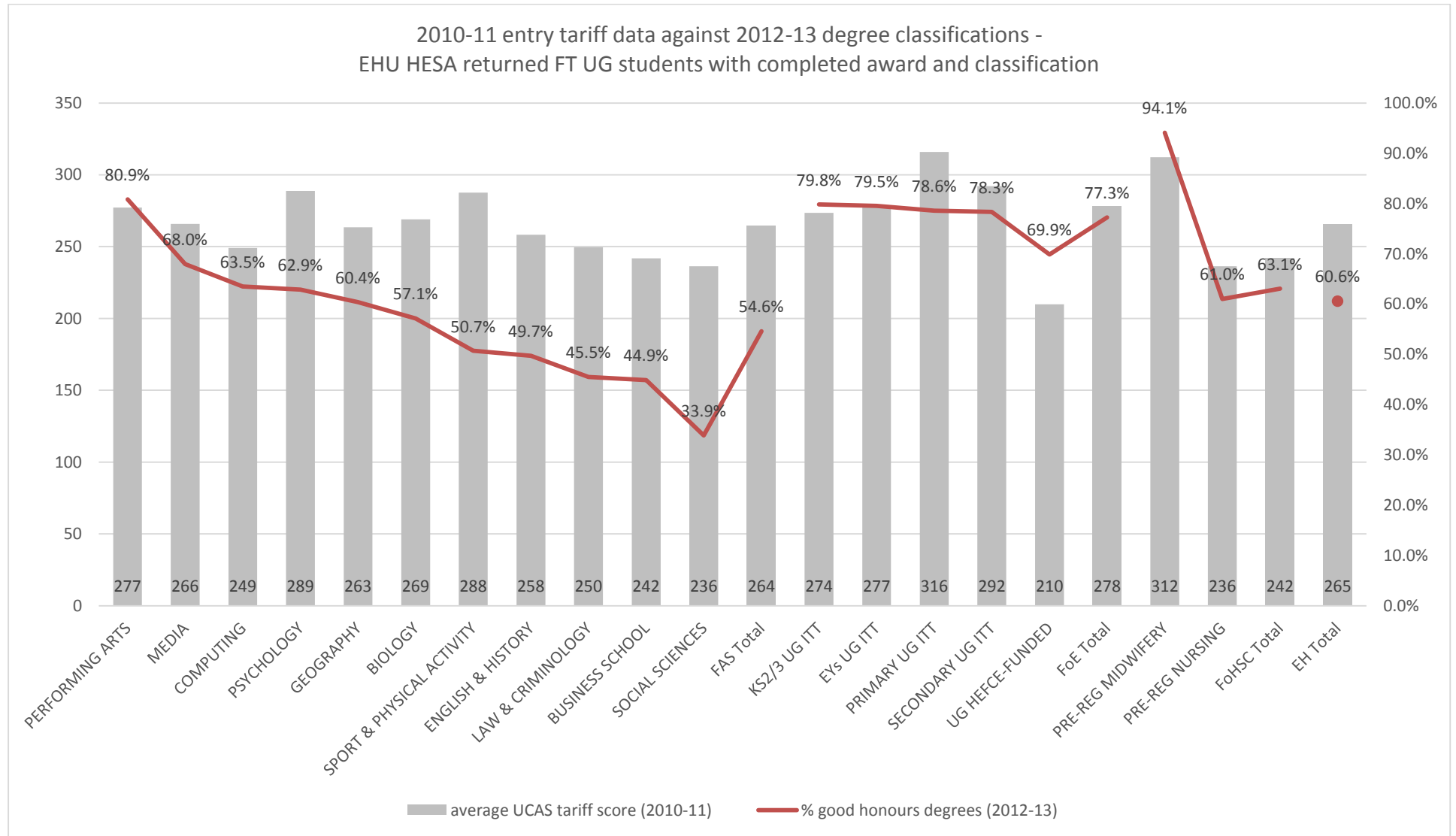
#### Summary:

There have been a number of studies aiming to correlate entry qualifications to final degree classification. In general, a correlation has been noted between the A-level tariff scores on entry and level 4 and final degree success. The correlation between entry level and level 4 results is significantly higher than that for the final degree classification. The correlation reduces for high entry tariff scores with additional variables, such as gender, influencing degree classification. The percentage of good degrees awarded to students on professional programmes in the Faculties of Education and Health & Social Care follow the anticipated pattern with good degrees tracking entry tariffs. Students undertaking HEFCE monitored programmes in the Faculty of Education entering with lower tariff scores and exiting with approximately 9% fewer good degrees. Data for the Faculty of Health & Social Care HEFCE monitored programmes has been suppressed as having too few students to provide reliable trend data. Variations in the Faculty of Arts & Sciences are more pronounced with the percentage of good degrees ranging from 80.9% to 33.9% whilst average tariff ranges span 236 to 289.

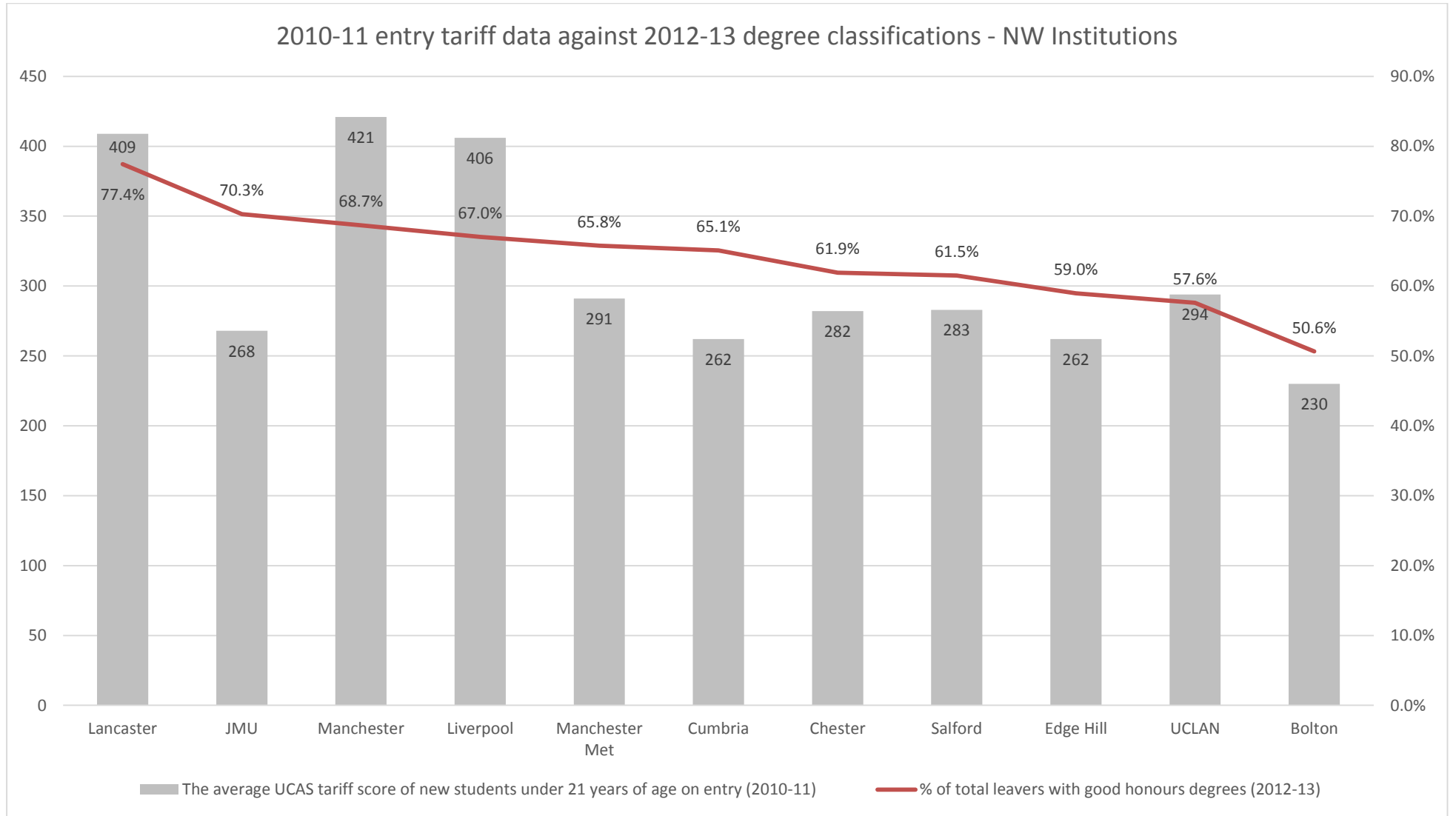
Edge Hill's overall proportion of good degrees was ninth out of the 11 institutions in the comparator group as shown; the tariff intake was equal ninth. Cumbria University having a similar intake tariff but awarding 6.8% more good honours degrees. Pre-92 institutions have significantly higher tariff scores as anticipated with similarly increased percentages of good honours degrees awarded. Liverpool John Moores University is a notable exception in the data set awarding 70.3% good honours degrees against an intake score of 268.



Entry tariff data and percentage of good honours degrees for 2012/13 Edge Hill Full-time Undergraduate Students by Faculty and Programme.



2010/11 Entry Tariff data and Percentage of Good Honours Degrees for 2012/13 all First-degree Undergraduate Students by Institution.



Distribution of Tariff Points by Department for the Faculty of Arts & Sciences

