HOW CAN ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK ENHANCE STUDENTS' LEARNING?

Dai Hounsell

1. assessment and feedback in transformation

2. feedback & high-quality learning

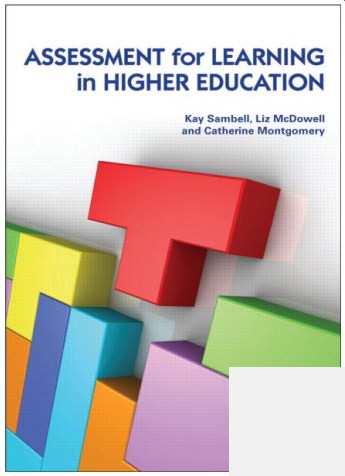
3. assessment and feedback in transformation

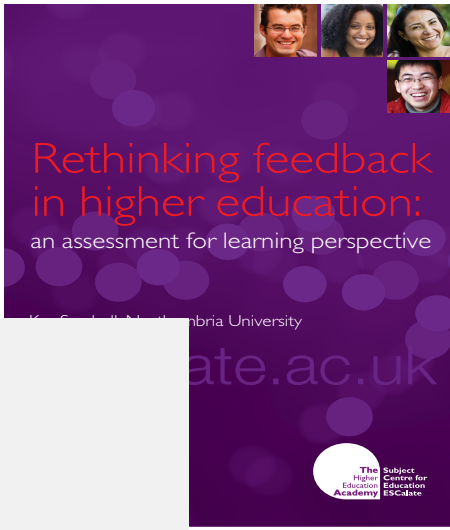
4. assessment and feedback in transformation

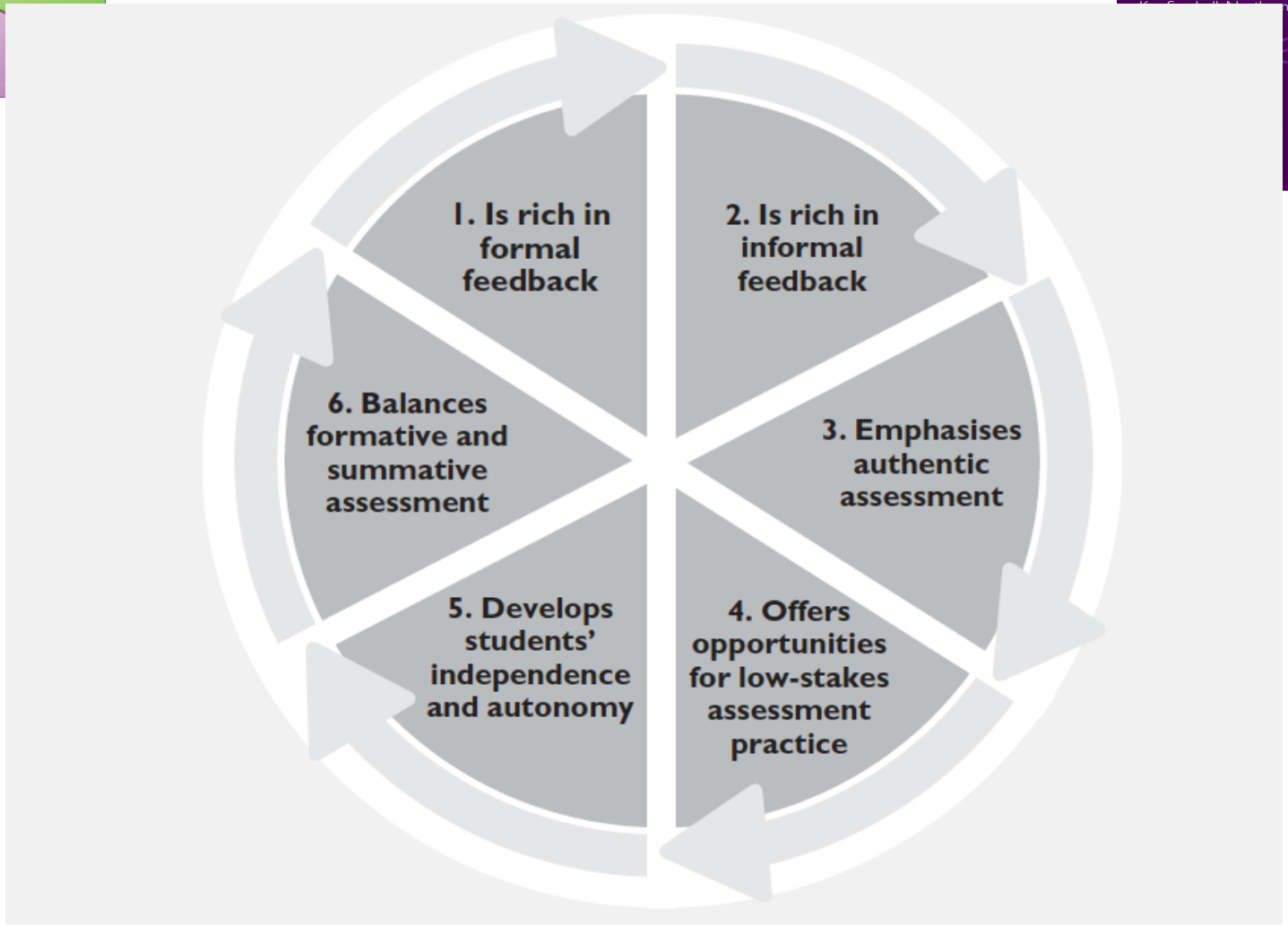
1. assessment and feedback in transformation

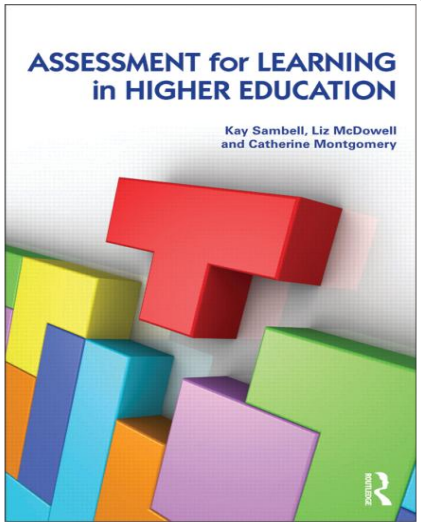
ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK IN TRANSFORMATION

from		*towards*
assessment as primarily summative/judgmental *(assessment of learning)*	→	**assessment as primarily formative/developmental** *(assessment for learning)*
assessment as separate from teaching & learning	→	**assessment and learning as closely interrelated**
feedback as optional, assessment-focused, generated by the teacher	→	**feedback as optional, traversing learning, generated by teachers & students in dialogue**


ASSESSMENT for LEARNING
in HIGHER EDUCATION
Kay Sambell, Liz McDowell
and Catherine Montgomery


Rethinking feedback
in higher education:
an assessment for learning perspective
The Higher Education Academy
Subject Centre for Education ESCalate


1. Is rich in formal feedback
2. Is rich in informal feedback
3. Emphasises authentic assessment
4. Offers opportunities for low-stakes assessment practice
5. Develops students' independence and autonomy
6. Balances formative and summative assessment


ASSESSMENT for LEARNING
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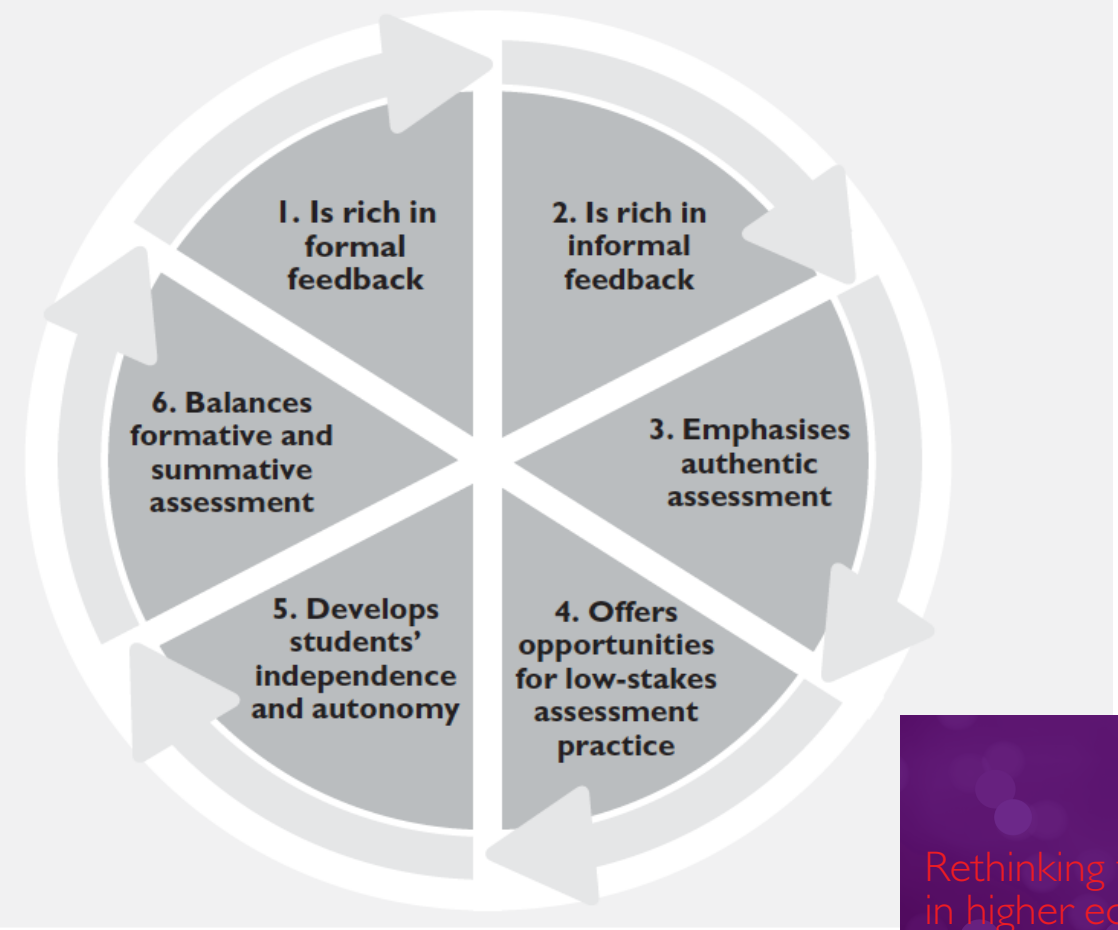
ROUTLEDGE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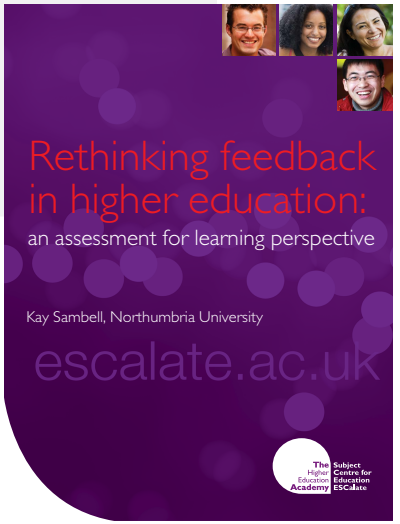

Rethinking feedback in higher education:
an assessment for learning perspective
Kay Sambell, Northumbria University
escalate.ac.uk
The Higher Education Academy
Subject Centre for Education ESCalate

2. feedback and high-quality learning

FEEDBACK AND LEARNING

'It has long been recognised, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively, when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might do in order to improve . . .'

Hounsell, D. (2003). 'Student feedback, learning and development' In Slowey, M. and Watson, D (eds) *Higher Education and the Lifecourse*, Buckingham: SRHE/OUP, 67-78

WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

Learning without feedback is 'blind archery'

[tiro con arco ciego]

WHY FEEDBACK MATTERS

Feedback is indispensable to high-quality learning, teaching and assessment,

At its most effective, it can enable all students to achieve their best

FUNDAMENTALS OF FEEDBACK
What forms does / can feedback take?

pro forma written comments **exemplars**
exams **guidance** feedforward *traditional*
collaboration *on-display learning* peer audio
past questions **screencast** whole-class
clickers in-class assignments *cumulative* **editing**
using feedback well elective *self* co-revision
e-feedback redrafting reviewing progress
criteria **dialogue** *supervision* interaction
new briefing involvement *faster feedback*
model answers training *video* online

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'FEEDBACK'?

A RETHINK

it needn't be written

it needn't be from the lecturer/tutor

it needn't consist of comments

it needn't focus on students' written work

A MORE INCLUSIVE VIEW

- **it can be spoken, signalled, emoted, visualised, digitally recorded**
- **it can be self-generated or from peers or others, or ...**
- **... it can come via an activity, or process, or experience**
- **it can focus on a reflection, a response or answer to a question, a note, an idea, a first attempt, work-in-progress**
-

FEEDBACK: A WORKING DEFINITION

***Feedback comprises*:**

information, processes, activities or experiences

which aim to

synthesise, enable or accelerate students' learning

ABUNDANT RECENT EVIDENCE THAT FEEDBACK HAS NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE

1. **Pervasive evidence of wide-ranging student concerns about feedback**

- *quantity*
- *frequency*
- *consistency*
- *quality*
- *helpfulness*
- *distance/interaction*
- *promptness*
- *transparency/accessibility*

ABUNDANT EVIDENCE OF INEFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

2. **The evidence spans subjects, institutions, & national systems of higher education**

- ***evidence from the UK***

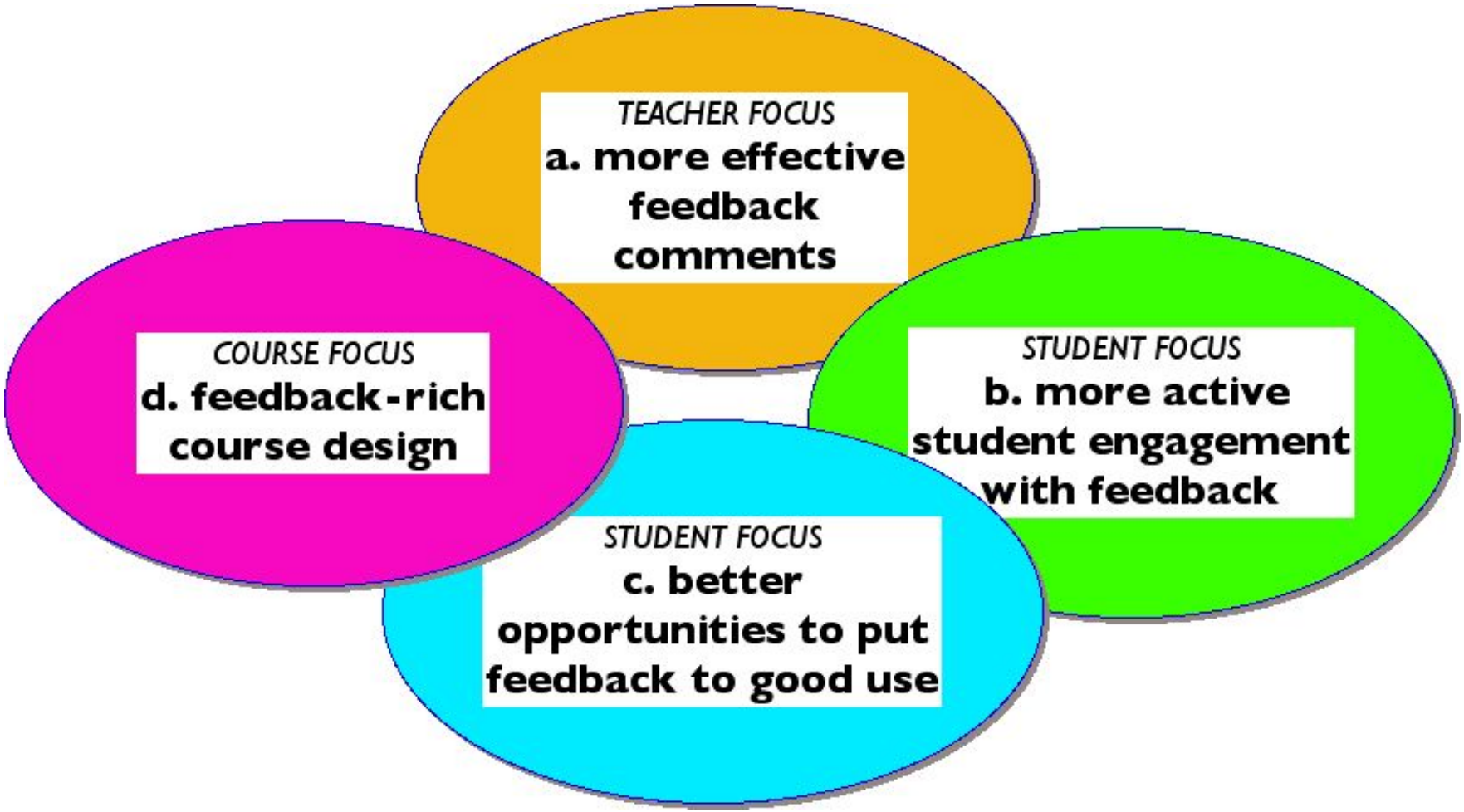
  e.g. *National Student Surveys* (2007-14); QAA *Learning from Subject Review* (2006); Crook et al. (2006); Maclellan, (2001); Hounsell (2003, 2005); Price et al. (2010); Beaumont et al. (2011) Sambell et al (2013)

- ***evidence from Sweden, Australia and Hong Kong***

  e.g. Jonsson, (2013); Krause et al. (2005) and Orrell (2006); Carless (2006, 2010)

3. improving feedback and assessment-for-learning

IMPROVING FEEDBACK
Four Approaches



www.enhancingfeedback.ed.ac.uk

TEACHER FOCUS

a. more effective feedback comments

FEEDBACK AND LEARNING

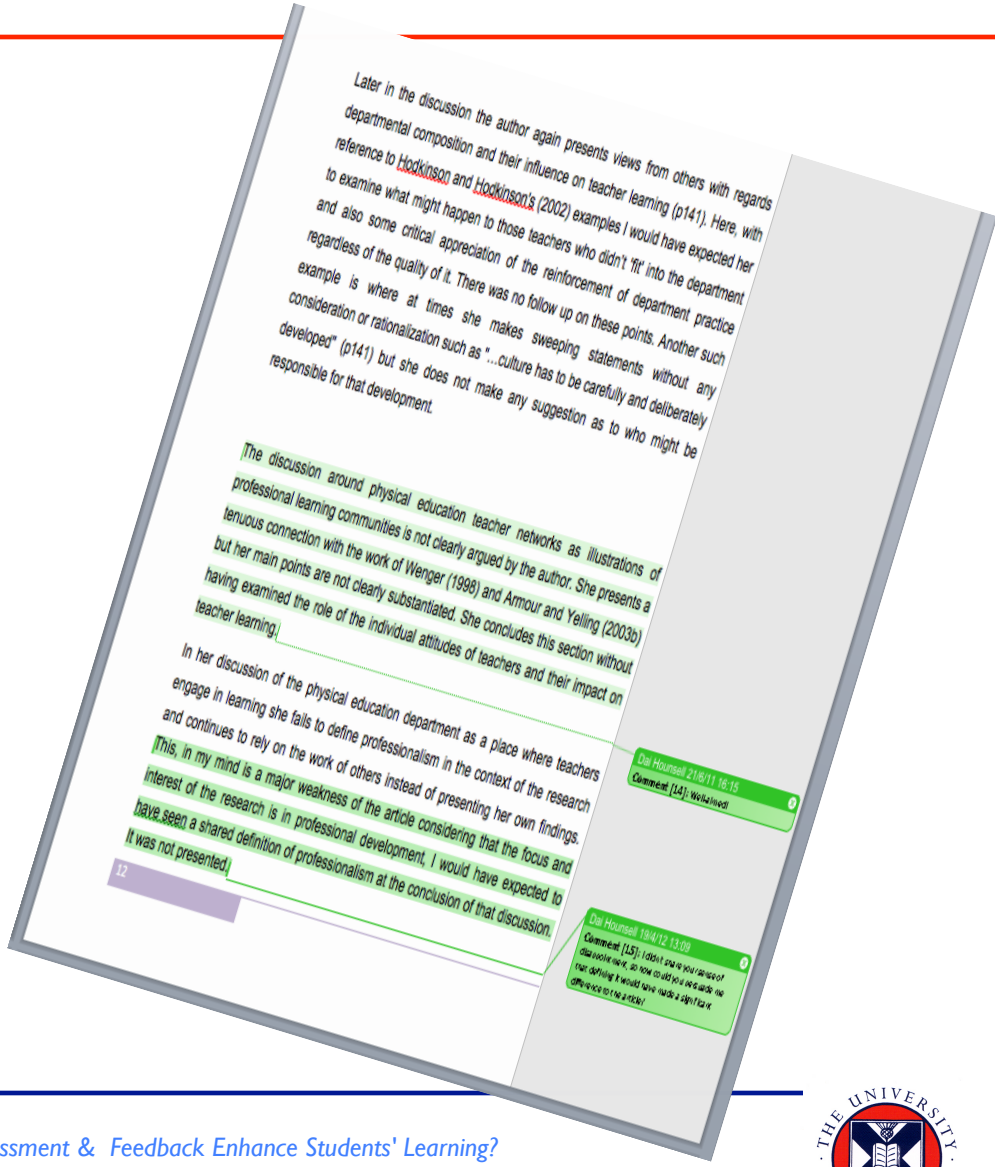
'It has long been recognised, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively, when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might do in order to improve.

And while we can of course monitor, and reflect on, our own performance, there are many situations where self-appraisal is of only limited value: we also need feedback from someone more expert (more knowledgeable, better informed, more highly skilled) than ourselves.'

Hounsell, D. (2003). 'Student feedback, learning and development' In Slowey, M. and Watson, D (eds) *Higher Education and the Lifecourse*, Buckingham: SRHE/OUP, 67-78

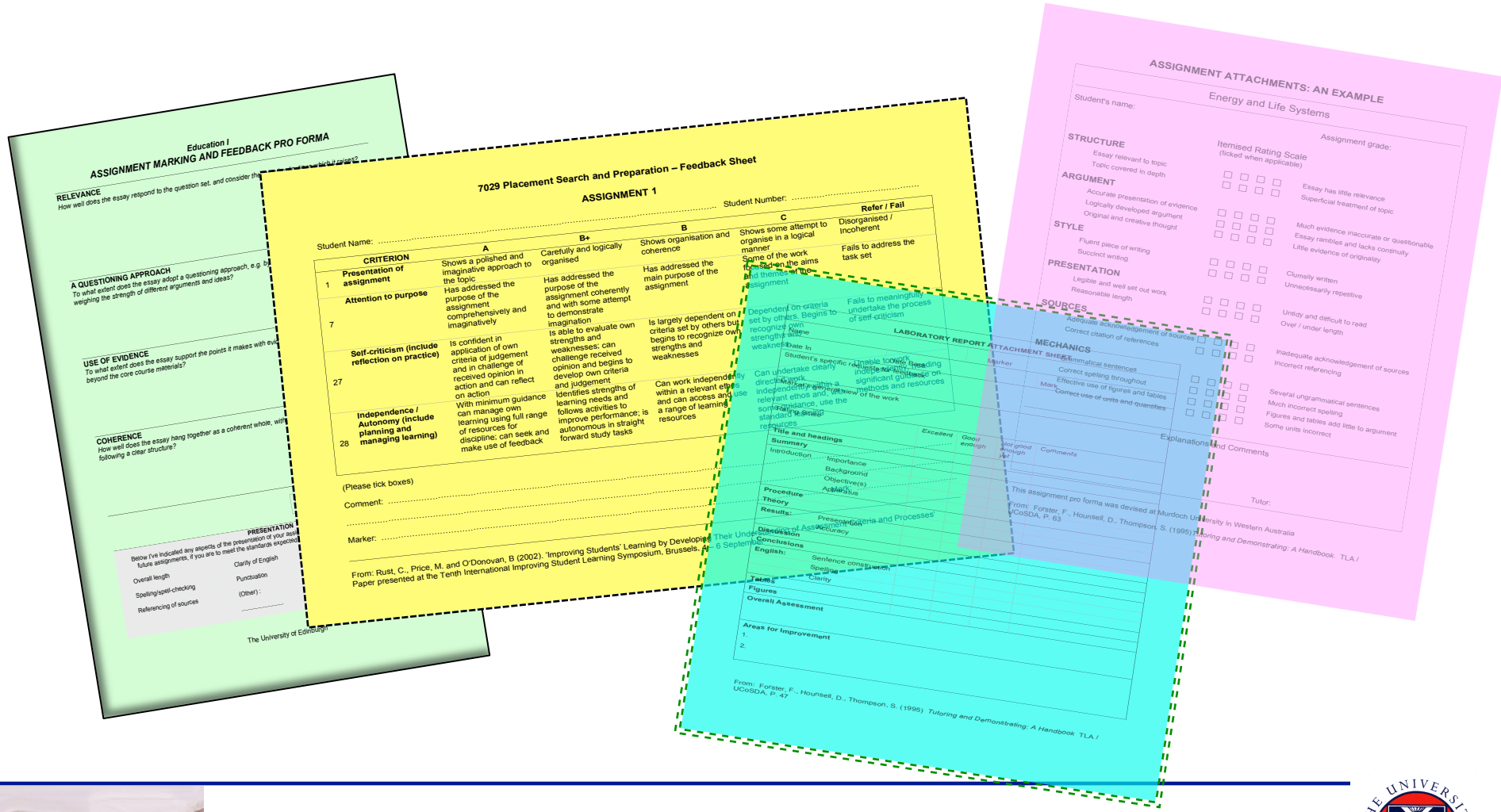
MORE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK COMMENTS

- **aligning feedback to criteria & standards**
- **clarifying commenting purposes**
- **three-step comments**
- audio and video feedback



MORE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK COMMENTS

aligning feedback to criteria & standards



CLARIFYING PURPOSES

recommending • correcting • explaining

suggesting • advising • criticising

questioning/probing

praising & encouraging • discussing

evaluating quality • justifying the mark

CLARIFYING PURPOSES

MINI-ACTIVITY

In your discipline/subject area, which of these functions would you see as *most* important (and which *least* important) if you were giving feedback to :

a. **a student at your University doing their *first* piece of assessed work ?**

b. **a final-year student at your University ?**

CLARIFYING PURPOSES

MINI-ACTIVITY

recommending • correcting • explaining

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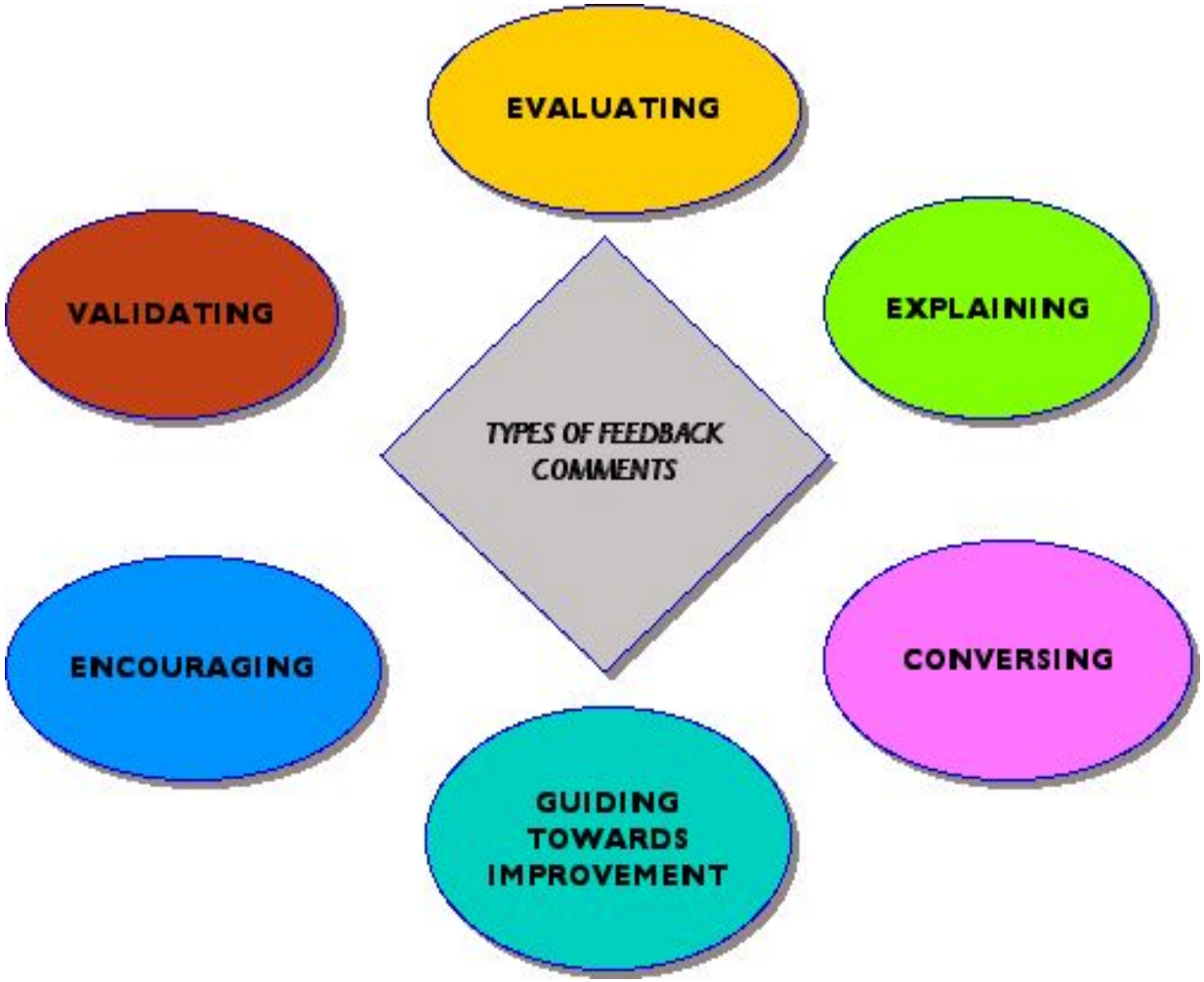
CLARIFYING PURPOSES

MINI-ACTIVITY



THREE-STEP COMMENTING

(Based on Brown & Glover, 2006; Walker 2009, 2013)

pointing out the error

identifying the shortcoming

naming the issue

clarifying/ explaining why

indicating how/where

suggesting what would be better/ how to improve

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMENTS

① focus on the work or task undertaken, not the student personally

② avoid imperatives (!), private symbols (sp) and cryptic comments ("evidence?")

③ comments are particularised or illustrated with a specific example

④ focus on two or three key areas for improvement

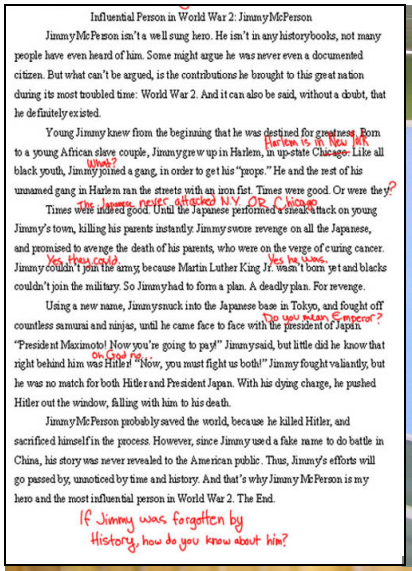
⑤ suggest how the student can aim to improve

STUDENT FOCUS

b. more active student engagement with feedback

MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

- **Elective feedback**
- **Exemplars**
- **Peer and self-generated feedback**



Influential Person in World War 2: JimmyMcPerson

JimmyMcPerson isn't a well sung hero. He isn't in any historybooks, not many people have even heard of him. Some might argue he was never even a documented citizen. But what can't be argued, is the contributions he brought to this great nation during its most troubled time: World War 2. And it can also be said, without a doubt, that he definitely existed.

Young Jimmy knew from the beginning that he was destined for greatness. Born to a young African slave couple, Jimmy grew up in Harlem, in up-state Chicago. Like all black youth, Jimmy joined a gang, in order to get his "props." He and the rest of his unnamed gang in Harlem ran the streets with an iron fist. Times were good. Or were they?

Times were indeed good. Until the Japanese performed a sneak attack on young Jimmy's town, killing his parents instantly. Jimmy swore revenge on all the Japanese, and promised to avenge the death of his parents, who were on the verge of curing cancer. Jimmy couldn't join the army, because Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't born yet and blacks couldn't join the military. So Jimmy had to form a plan. A deadly plan. For revenge.

Using a new name, Jimmy snuck into the Japanese base in Tokyo, and fought off countless samurai and ninjas, until he came face to face with the president of Japan. "President Maximoto! Now you're going to pay!" Jimmy said, but little did he know that right behind him was Hitler! "Now, you must fight us both!" Jimmy fought valiantly, but he was no match for both Hitler and President Japan. With his dying charge, he pushed Hitler out the window, falling with him to his death.

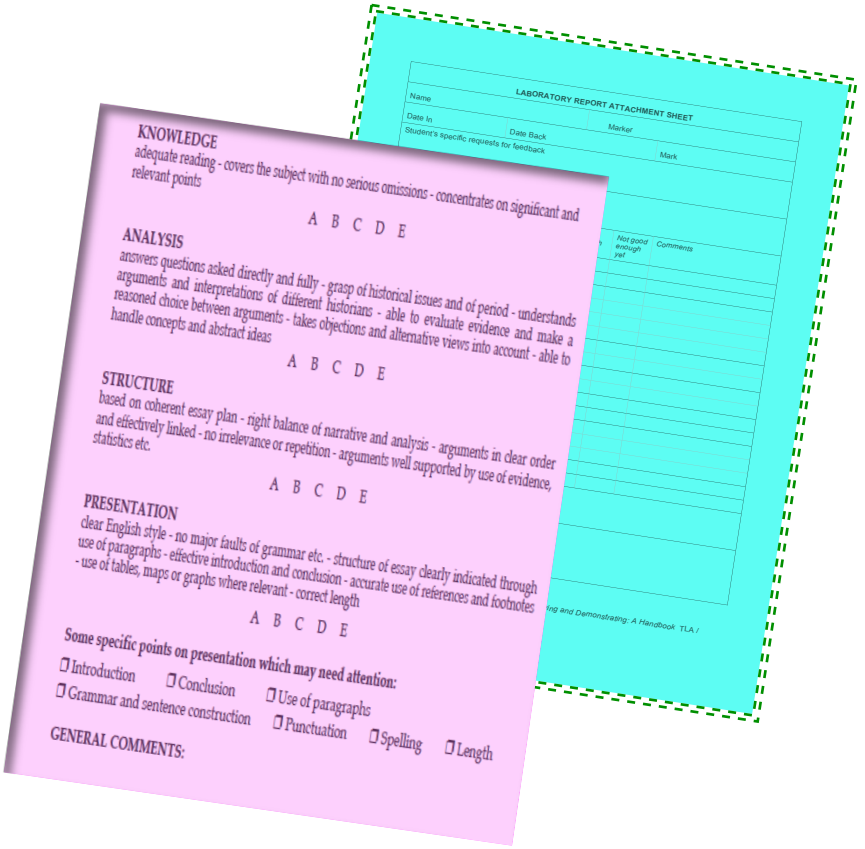
JimmyMcPerson probably saved the world, because he killed Hitler, and sacrificed himself in the process. However, since Jimmy used a fake name to do battle in China, his story was never revealed to the American public. Thus, Jimmy's efforts will go passed by, unnoticed by time and history. And that's why Jimmy McPerson is my hero and the most influential person in World War 2. The End.

If Jimmy was forgotten by History, how do you know about him?

MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

elective feedback

what is 'elective' feedback ?



WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO PHILIP MALLETT

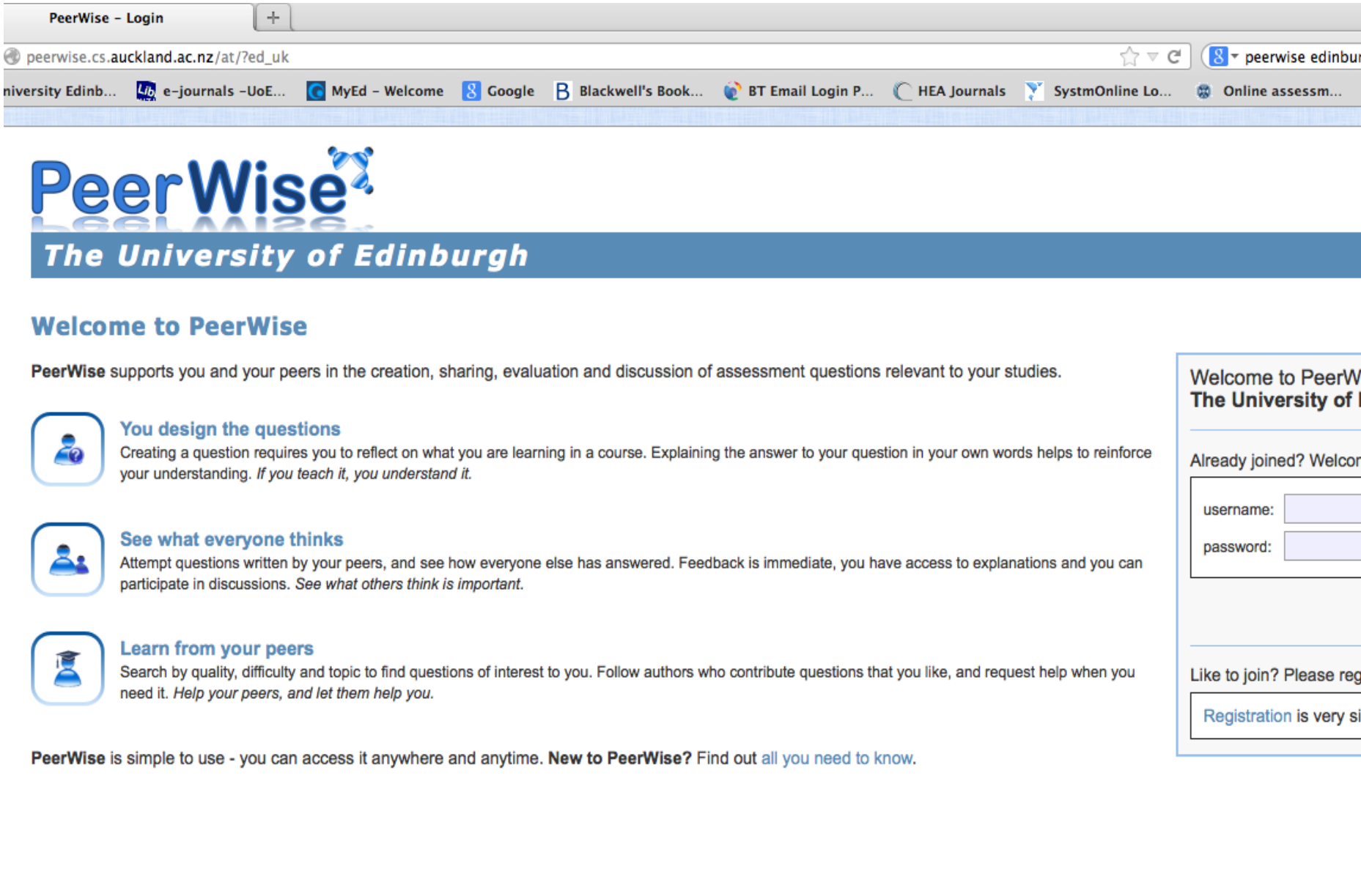
MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH FEEDBACK

exemplars

"[Students] need to learn to discover what quality looks and feels like, and the aspects – whether large or small – that detract from it. They need to develop a vocabulary for expressing and communicating what they find. Furthermore, they should gradually attune their growing realisations and discourse to the norms of the discipline, field or profession"

(Sadler, 2010)

peer and self-generated feedback



Welcome to PeerWise

PeerWise supports you and your peers in the creation, sharing, evaluation and discussion of assessment questions relevant to your studies.

You design the questions

Creating a question requires you to reflect on what you are learning in a course. Explaining the answer to your question in your own words helps to reinforce your understanding. *If you teach it, you understand it.*

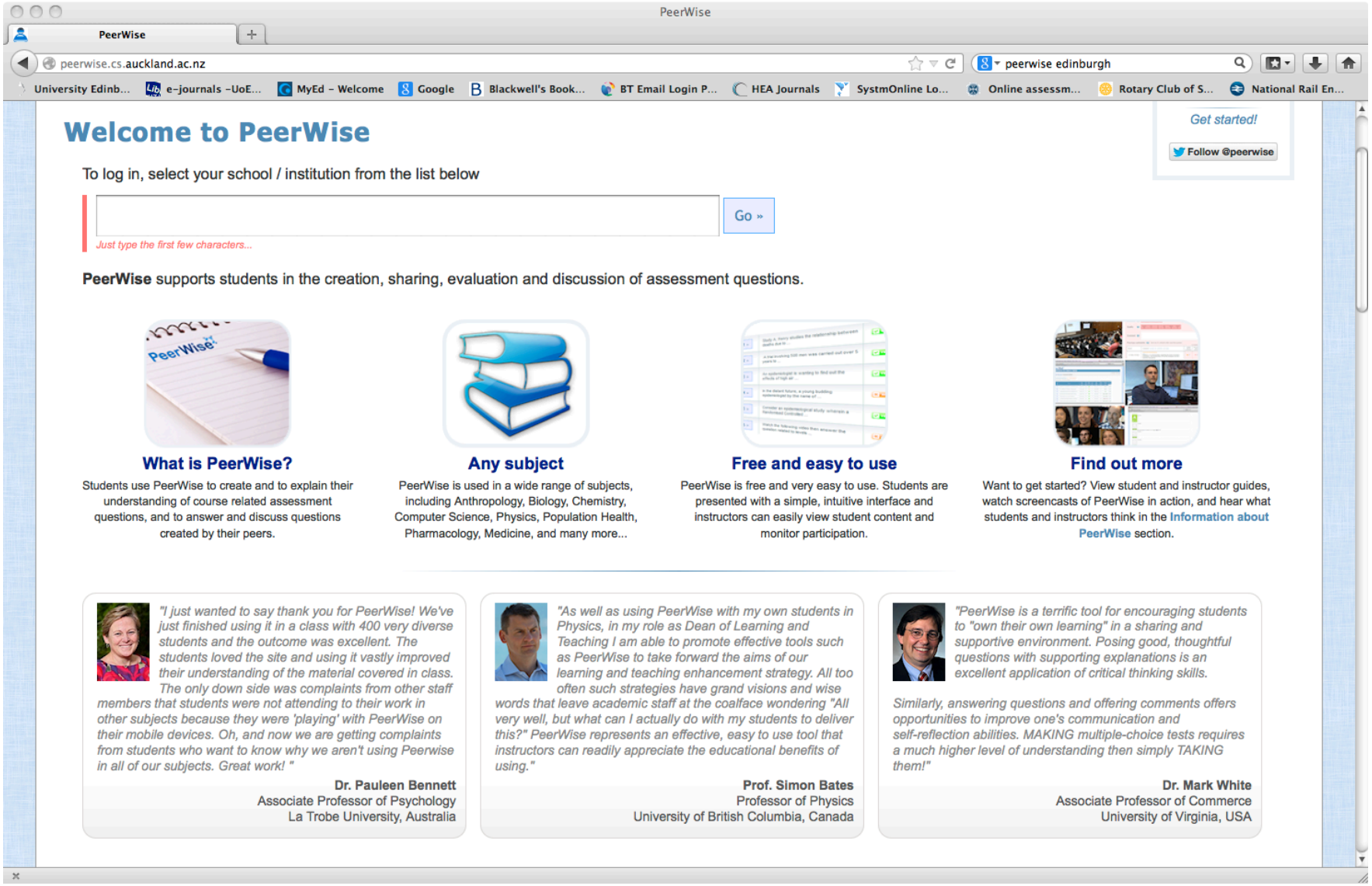
See what everyone thinks

Attempt questions written by your peers, and see how everyone else has answered. Feedback is immediate, you have access to explanations and you can participate in discussions. *See what others think is important.*

Learn from your peers

Search by quality, difficulty and topic to find questions of interest to you. Follow authors who contribute questions that you like, and request help when you need it. *Help your peers, and let them help you.*

http://peerwise.cs.auckland.ac.nz/



STUDENT FOCUS

c. better opportunities to put feedback to good use

MISSING THE FEEDBACK BUS ?

Why is feedback often uncollected ?

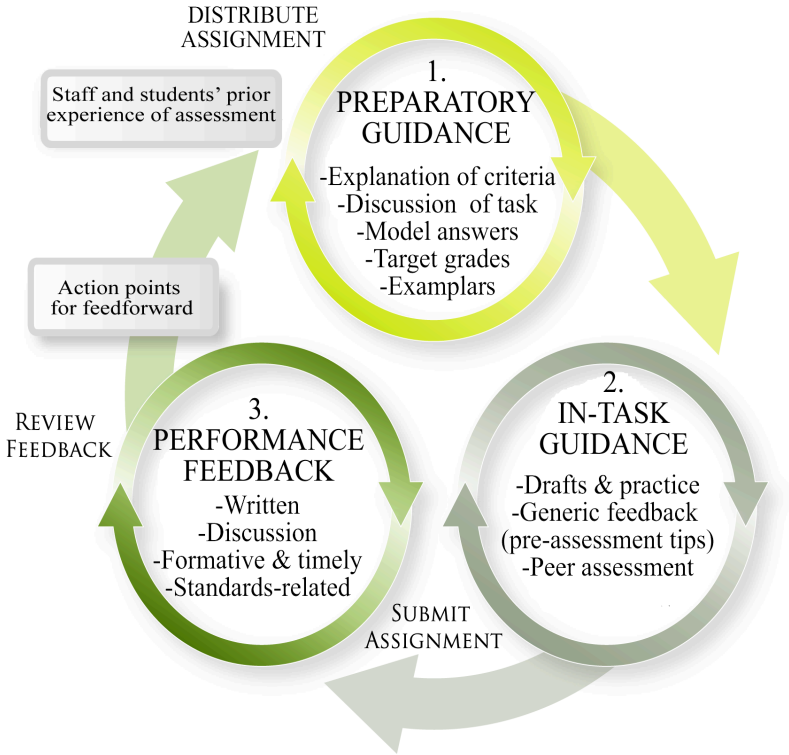
Does some feedback always come too late ?

with acknowledgements to Dr. Judy Hardy

Feedback as a loop or ongoing cycle

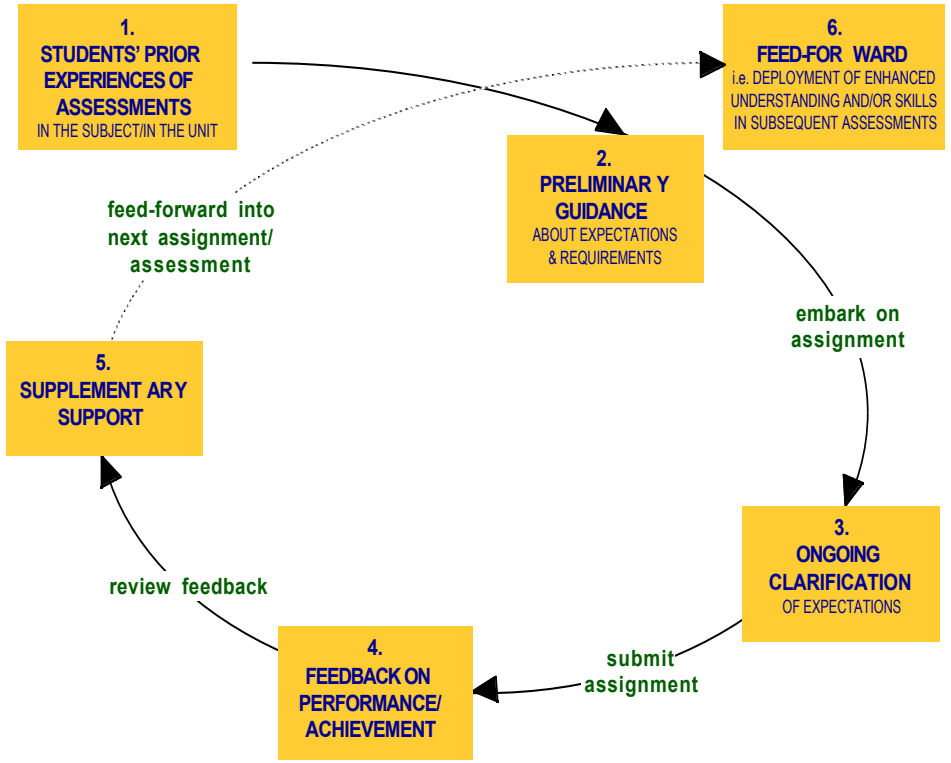
"When we desire a motion to follow a given pattern, the difference between this pattern and the actually performed motion is used as a new input to cause the part regulated to move in such a way as to bring its motion closer to that given by the pattern."

(Wiener, 1961, p.6)



FROM FEEDBACK TO FEEDFORWARD

- **feedforward assignments**
- **cumulative assignments**
- **'threaded' feedback**



FULLER USE OF FEEDBACK COMMENTS

FEEDFORWARD ASSIGNMENTS

- **draft/ comment/ revise/ resubmit**
- **parts-to-whole**
- **threading and chaining**

Feedforward and tracking progress on dissertations
The dissertation is the most challenging piece of writing that Edinburgh University's undergraduate Business School students have to undertake. Since the target length is a daunting 18,000 words and the process takes place over a full year, it has to be carefully managed to ensure that it stays on track and blends in with the various other assignments and assessments that the students complete in their final year.

In the Business School, this is being achieved with the aid of a computerised 'dissertation support system' (DSS for short). The DSS operates across across eleven degree programmes, helping to match around 180 students with topic supervisors and enabling both to keep tabs on how the dissertation work is progressing over the course of the year. There is a minimum of four supervisory meetings associated with each dissertation, and the students get 'feedforward' comments on two draft dissertation chapters.

COURSE FOCUS

d. feedback-rich course design

d. FEEDBACK-RICH COURSE DESIGN

- **On-display learning**

  e.g. oral and poster presentations

- **Collaborative tasks & activities**

- **Clickers & 'real-time' feedback**

d. FEEDBACK-RICH COURSE DESIGN
ON-DISPLAY LEARNING AS FEEDBACK PROXY

(FROM HOUNSELL & MCCUNE, 2003)

A social sciences student

Someone had a list of questions that they were going to ask at the beginning, then they went through them. I think it's a really good idea ...

Two physical sciences students

S1: You've got hands when you're presenting, it's so good.

S2: I was noticing that when I was doing it.

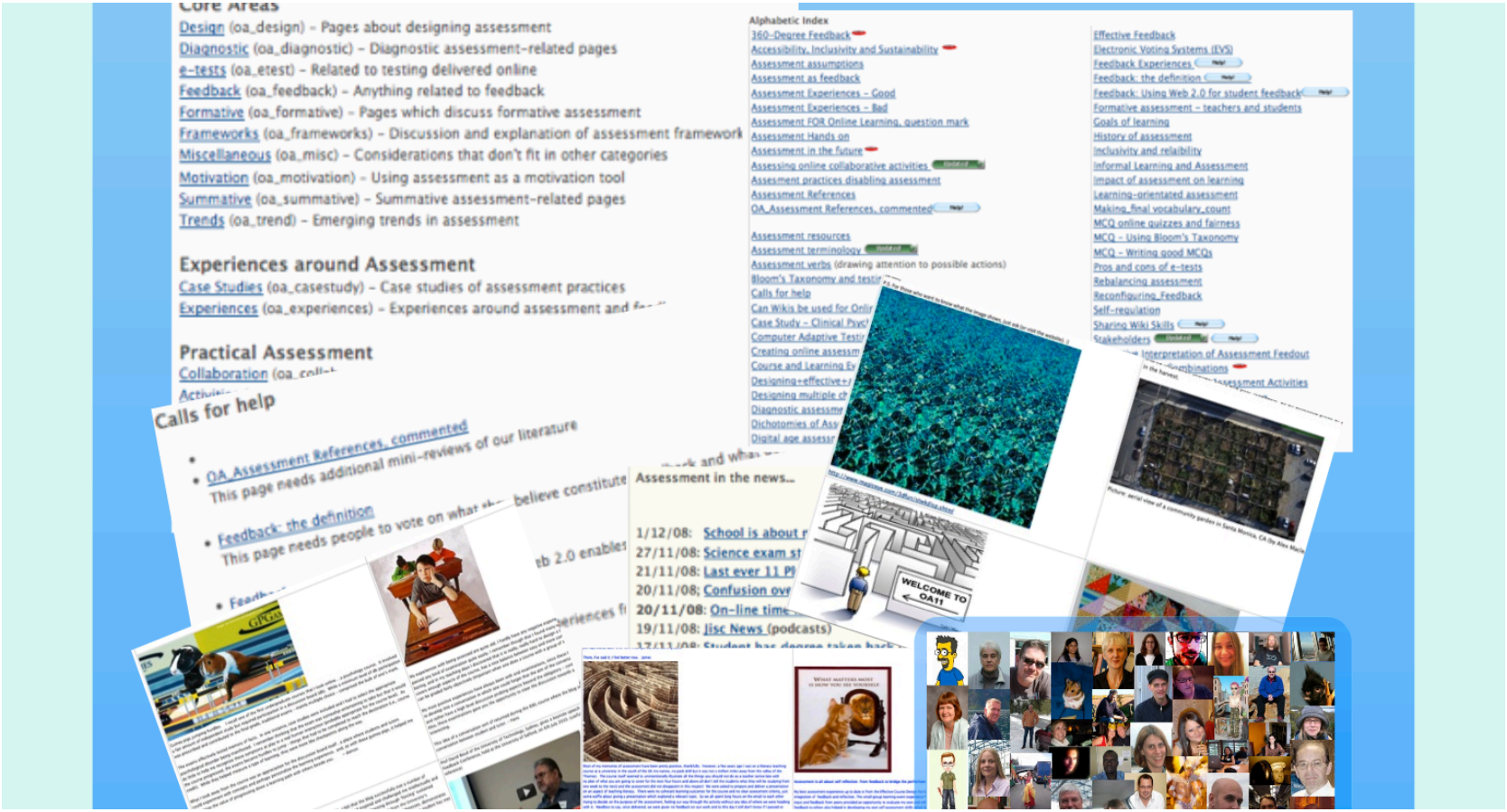
S1: You used your hands when you were talking about the Northern and the Southern Hemisphere, and it was great because you don't actually have to give all the details. Like a diagram, you can point to bits.

A humanities student

I think it helps if you follow a structure. Like [lecturer X] always tells you what he's going to say and then elaborates on all the points, which is really good for notetaking...

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

co-planning, co-creating, co-writing, co-editing

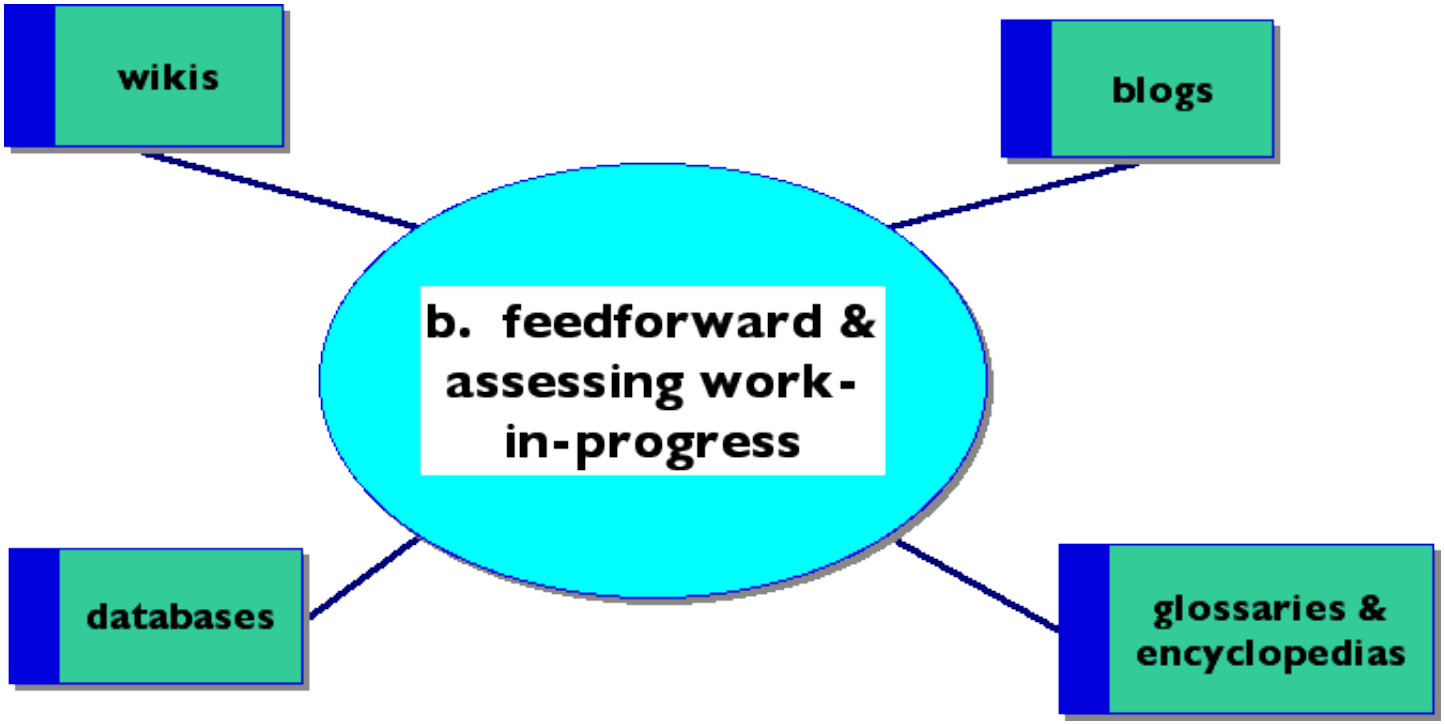


CLICKERS AND REAL-TIME FEEDBACK

Bates, S. & Galloway, R. (2012). 'The inverted classroom in a large enrolment introductory physics course: a case study.' *Proceedings of the Higher Education Academy STEM Learning and Teaching Conference*. DOI: 10.11120/stem.hea.2012.071

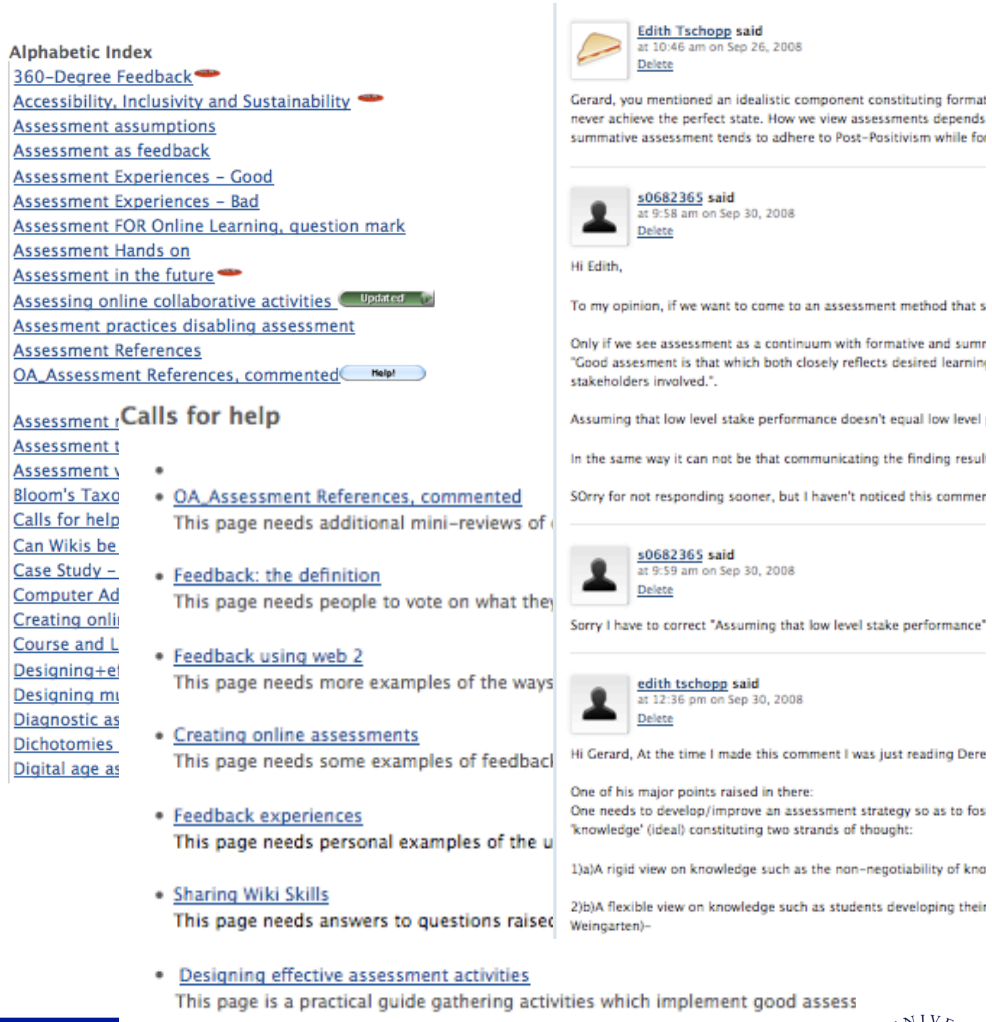
4. new directions for feedback and assessment-for-learning

ASSESSING WORK-IN-PROGRESS



ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, I

- ***Class blogs and discussion boards***
- ***Group wikis***
- ***Team portfolios***
- ***Shared databases and compendia***
- ***Collaborative writing tools***



ASSESSING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING, 2

SOME CHALLENGES

- **social loafing, the sucker effect, 'diligent isolates'** *(Peterse & Thompson, 2010)*
- **who gets the credit ?**
- **evaluate the processes or the product ?**
- **the moral economy of grading peers' work**

EVIDENCE-INFORMED TASK DESIGN

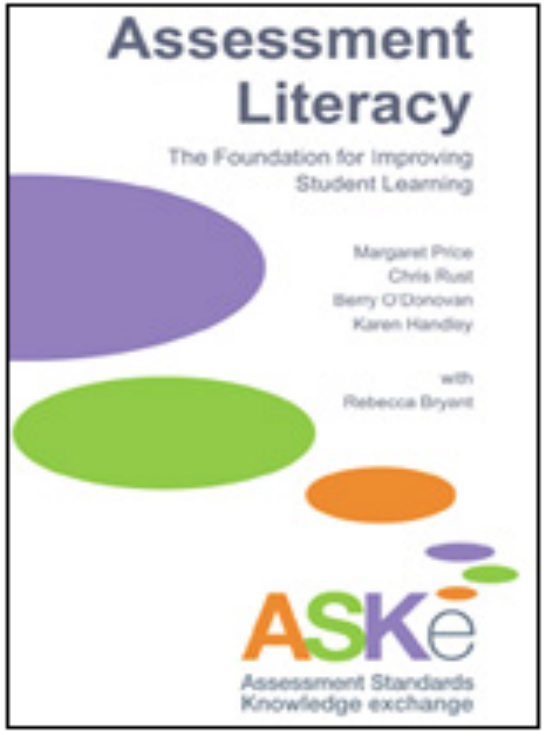
– **peer feedback *vs.* peer marking** *(Carless 1999)*
– **designs for groupwork** *(Davies, 2009)*
  conjunctive, additive, disjunctive & discretionary
– **alertness to destructive & constructive friction** *(Vermunt & Verloop, 1999)*

Alvarez, I., Espasa, A. & Guasch, T. (2012). 'The value of feedback in improving collaborative writing assignments in an online learning environment.' *Studies in Higher Education*, 37.4, pp. 387-400

Espasa, A. & Meneses, J. (2010). 'Analysing feedback processes in an online teaching and learning environment: an exploratory study.' *Higher Education* 59, 277–292

A MORE ACTIVE STUDENT ROLE IN ASSESSMENT

- graduates adept at evaluating the quality of their own and others' work
- students given opportunities to become skilled at giving feedback to others
- greater student choice over how/ when/where they will be assessed
- student involvement in determining the criteria (and weightings) used to assess a given piece of work



http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/books/assessment_literacy.html

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Sambell, K. et al (2013). *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education* London: Routledge ISBN 978 0415 58658