EAT ERASMUS Case Study Template

Case Study title: Enhancing student outcomes by improving student assessment literacy

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Abstract (c.200 words)

What was your focus? What were your aims?
There were two aims to this case study, which was undertaken on an English Language and Literature module. Firstly, to enhance students' understanding of, and engagement with, the marking criteria. Secondly, to enhance students' understanding of the benefits of peer feedback for their own learning, and to increase engagement with the activity.

What was the context? (discipline/sample etc.) How did you investigate your focus?
The module is an English Language and Literature module, for Year 1 students from various language/literature-related degrees. The focus was investigated by observing student behaviours, student feedback in module appraisal surveys, and the outcomes of the assessments themselves.

What were your findings about what you did and what you learnt?
Supporting the students to understand the meaning of the marking criteria empowered them to interpret and internalise the standards from those criteria. Understanding the purpose for peer-feedback activities and how they impact on their own work, led to acceptance of, and more engagement with, the peer-feedback process.
So enhancing and supporting student assessment and feedback literacy had a positive effect on their engagement with the assessment, and a positive impact on their outcomes.

What implications are there for assessment and feedback practice and research in higher education?
This case study shows the importance of supporting students' assessment literacy, as a means to enhancing their engagement with an assessment task.

Designing an Assessment Intervention: What is your assessment focus?

Prompts	Key questions	Please add some thoughts/experiences/reflections in this column
Focus	**What is the key assessment issue you considered?**	**Marking Criteria:** The main issues were that the students reported that they didn't understand the assessment criteria – they didn't understand what the headings were. They were not able to interpret what was required of the criteria, and how to enact that. In particular, understanding the difference between 'Critical thinking' vs 'Criticizing' was a challenge. Student feedback after the intervention was delivered was that they understood the criteria, and the expectations that they represented, and they were no longer "just words on the page". **Feedback:** There had always been a peer feedback process as part of the module, and this was a formative task. However, the students didn't understand the importance of the process, or how to adapt it to their learning. If the activity wasn't marked then the perception was that they didn't have to do it. The change adopted made the peer feedback element 10% of the module mark, and used PeerMark to track the peer feedback. If a student didn't do the task, then they got a challenge about not completing it. So the task became about the importance of feedback, and what staff were looking for when marking the essay. Frequent comments from students previously were commonly that they felt that the staff should be marking the work, rather than students. The emphasis was therefore changes to make the purpose of peer marking emphasized as *supporting reflection on their own ideas* as the outcome of the process. Students were required to write a paragraph about their own work, and how they had applied lessons learned from the peer review process to their own work. Feedback after the change only included one comment that the staff should be doing the feedback.
Why did you choose this focus?	**Why did you focus on this? On the basis of what evidence? Why did it need looking at?**	Content of the module was OK, it was more about understanding how to go about doing textual analysis. So it helped them understand the assignment and the marking criteria. A process of trying to help the students do well in the module.
What was the context? *Module / programme Discipline Country Who was involved? (staff/students)*	**What is the disciplinary/module/course context in which your assessment work is situated?**	SP1416 – "Style and Genre" Year 2 Compulsory for English Language and Literature students, optional for English Language and Linguistics, and English Literature students. UK (Wales)

Why is this important? _What is your contribution – is it original? Is it confirmatory of previous work? Is it actively taking the field forward by adding new understandings?_	Why is what you did important?	The module forms the basis of the process of critiquing writing, and also writing effectively.
How does this work contribute to current understandings we have of assessment and feedback _To what extent are you aware of current national and international assessment and feedback higher education debates_	How does what you focused on link to current understandings of and priorities in assessment and feedback within your institution and more widely in higher education?	The approach taken focused on supporting the students in understanding marking criteria, which is a major area of focus for the university. Building assessment literacy, and feedback literacy are also key priorities.

Reporting on your case study

The aim of ERASMUS EAT is to look at how an integrated assessment framework (EAT) can support enhancements in assessment and feedback by trying to develop staff and student self-regulatory practices. Your case study will benefit from being very clearly focused from the outset and in considering how all the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the EAT Framework need to be attended to in order to address your core issue. Keeping it as simple as possible is a good thing. Engaging with students as much as possible and thinking clearly about the evidence that you would like to collect will help in the design and implementation of your idea.

Implementation: What did you do?		
Prompts	**Key questions**	**Please add some thoughts/experiences/reflections in this column**
The starting situation *The project promotes an action research type approach – working with students and staff to implement ideas and then evaluating them.* *It encourages the use of a mixed methodology and methods – the use of quantitative methods (e.g. survey data) and qualitative approaches (e.g., discussions with colleagues) to investigate practice.*	**How did you investigate your focus? What was the rationale for choosing this aspect?**	**Textual analysis 50%** and then an **essay 50%**. There was always a peer-based formative task which had various forms. **Textual Analysis:** Staff gave them the text to analyse They could choose what to apply to the text in terms of the aspects to look at. They could choose the text and what to focus on. The texts did correspond better to each concept. Now they can choose any text that hasn't been one looked at in detail the seminars. The text chosen for textual analysis forms the basis for the submission. The essay is focused around a question, and they use a text to help give examples. The students often saw the Essay as another textual analysis, but now they are better at seeing the difference.
	Did you do any pre and post testing of ideas/abilities/ attitudes?	Use of module surveys and comments from students. Helped the students in seminars understand how to write a textual analysis, but not so much explicit support on the process and the criteria. Students would then get confused with the essay. Marking criteria and guidelines were placed on the virtual learning environment for students to access, but it did not seem as if they truly understood them.
	When choosing an area of focus, what sources of information did you use to support your decision?	Sara chatted with EAT-Erasmus colleagues after a webinar, and had an individual meeting. Then looked at different components of EAT, to adopt as many of them as possible and make them work in a better way for the module. Approach was looking at EAT and seeing what would work the best.
	Did you use EAT to measure student/staff engagement in assessment pre and post?	No, EAT was not used as a measurement tool, only as a guide to promote thinking about the intervention.

What did you do?	What were the key things you did and with whom?	
Describe what your approach involved. *What did you do to enhance a self-regulatory approach to assessment and feedback practice* *What roles did students and educators play?* *See Moore et al (2015) Process diagram to help you describe the elements of what you did?*	**What were the key things you did and with whom?** **What student and staff groups did you engage with and how?** **Who approved ethical consent? (Institution?)** **Over what time scale did you conduct this project?** **Did it involve 1 or several iterations of change initiatives?** **What information did you collect?** **What tools/resources did you use?**	In successive seminars, staff focused on an element of the marking criteria, and worked with the students to explain and understand these through discussion. Staff made sure that they had covered all of the marking criteria before the peer review process happened. For the peer review process, students were given work that previous students had submitted, but this confused them a bit. The class discussions used the previous work, tied to each element of the marking criteria. For example, review it based on 'originality' as a criterion. Staff gave the students scaffolding for the analytical process. The peer review of previous work was structured based on each of the marking criteria, and what they could have done to improve the work based on the criteria. They were provided with a form to work through, all analysing the same text (a short poem), analysed through three different perspectives (based on the three main criteria areas). Students submitted a shorter review than they would have to for their actual summative assignment. They each submitted a practice textual analysis for the short poem for the peer-feedback exercise, so that they are devising similar reviews on the same subject matter. The textual analysis itself was not given for a mark/grade. The first time the process was run, the students were asked to provide a mark/grade for the peer's work, but it was observed that the students marked work really harshly, so the marking activity was removed from the exercise. The peer review was therefore just commenting on the peer's analysis, focusing on alignment with the marking criteria, and providing feedback on how the work could be improved. Students would then undertake a new, summative, textual analysis on a text of their own choosing. The students were advised to maybe choose a text they were studying in another module (in order to encourage synthesis between modules). Students of Creative Writing were allowed critique their own writing through this critical framework. The peer feedback was therefore training the students how to interpret the marking criteria, and what elements they should be aware of for their own work. The students should therefore have the skills/experience to self-critique their own work before it was submitted as a summative assessment.

What did you do?

| How was what you did aligned to the EAT concepts (FIDELITY) See check list below? | How did you incorporate EAT concepts into your design? | INCLUSIVE: Students were able to choose their own text to analyse – this is very important, as some students are doing English Language and others doing Literature or Creative Writing. So some could go back to a text that they already know. Some students came with the expectation that they have to choose high-brow literature, but they could do something modern or easy (Harry Potter, Songs, etc), for those who don't like reading classic literature. Students of Creative Writing could use their own work.

There is a rubric to mark to, but they have to include a reflective paragraph at the end of the work, identifying 3 aspects of their work that they would like feedback on, and why.

SHARED BELIEFS & VALUES: Came across in the marking criteria discussions. No specific sessions on this, but it was part of the explanations and discussions on criteria. For the reflective paragraphs at the end of the textual analysis had previously been tick-box approach, emphasised that the paragraph had a more important aspect – don't be cynical. The work would be marked before reading the paragraph, and emphasised that this was important to them and their development. There was a need to keep emphasising this, and to explain the purpose of Peer Review for self development.

SENSITIVE TO CONTEXT: Need to have flexibility for the text they choose, because literature is based on language. This module is core for both literature and language. So it is important to show how this module spans both disciplines.

HOLISTIC: Talking about criteria, made clear how they can apply what they learned to other modules. Do talk about criteria in general sense. Probably has a broader impact on other assessments. The teachers took stock of self-reported level of understanding at the beginning, and there was a significant different in the self-reported understanding of the criteria. Marking criteria were discussed in general, not just in respect to the module.

INGETRATIVE: Hope that they can see the links. Didn't have any comments from students about this, but they can see how going through the process is embedded in their learning about academic writing in general. The comments on the reflection were very thoughtful about how they approached the writing and the whole process, so an element of their own feed forward. Paragraph |
|---|---|---|
| • **Inclusive** – *do all students have equal access to learning and equal chances to do well?*
• **Shared beliefs and values** – *have these been discussed and agreed between staff and students? Is there agreement on the key self-regulatory skills that need to be focused on?*
• **Student-staff partnership** – *how genuine is this? To what extent are students encouraged to participate in all assessment decisions?*
• **Sensitive to context – how have you adapted assessment to suit your context?** *nuances of your discipline and course, situated within your faculty and institution; and nature of student intake – what is specific about your course/subject demands and types of students you have?*
• **Holistic** – *the whole experience of the student*
• **Integrative** – *how all aspects of assessment are interrelated and impact one another*
• **Agentic** – *allows students and lecturers to take control of their learning/teaching*
• **Engagement in meaningful learning experiences – relevant**
• **Sustainable** – *means manageable for all; also enabling students to manage their own learning themselves*
 – *so extent to which they are able to accurately assess the quality of their own work.* | **If relevant, how did you support colleagues to understand how to apply these concepts?**

To what extent were staff able to engage students in co-design? (see Appendix F) | |

		outputs: Things they have done now that they didn't do before, approaches they've tried, and explicitly referring their actions to the marking criteria, and linking their previous feedback to embedding these ideas to do better. Also linking it to the other modules and how they can use it for that. **AGENTIC:** Choice, reflecting on their past experiences. Have a lot of opportunities to reflect on their own work, and to feed that back to the staff as well. Helps to take control of the learning and link ideas to other work. With essay they can choose the essay question and their own text. **It was more challenging that the students choose their own text, so made it harder for the markers.** But helpful that they bring up text and you think it's a good example. That can then be brought in to the teaching. Having the conversations has enabled staff to understand the students better and what were the areas they didn't understand or needed more support. Open conversations were very valuable. It was an iterative process over time. **ENGAGEMENT:** Choice of subject that was of interest to the students, and related to own background, increased engagement significantly. **SUSTAINABLE:** Yes, very sustainable. A bit more work, but it made the peer review process much more workable and less work. A student who had previously failed was thankful that this year the peer review was compulsory, and she was thankful of the approach.

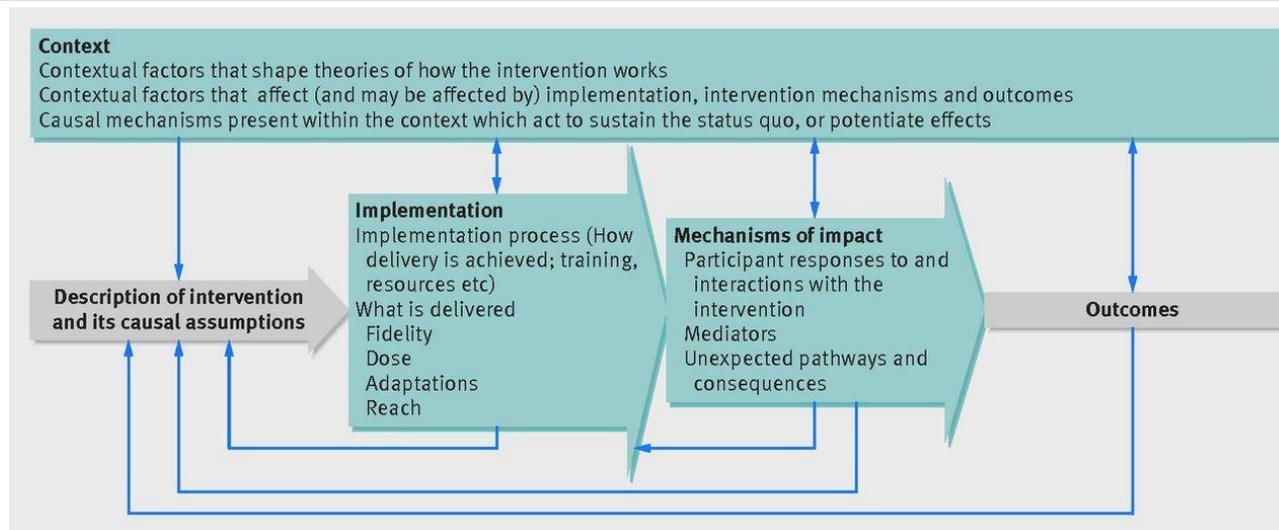| | **To what extent were you able to implement the EAT assessment and feedback principles?**

What *barriers and facilitators* were there to implementation? | The approach was focused very strongly around AL1 (Clarify what constitutes 'good'). However, it also brought in elements of AF2 (opportunities for early feedback), AF3 (peer feedback and dialogue) and AF4 (self-evaluation and self-feedback).

There are also elements of AD3 (inclusive assessment), as the students were able to choose texts that were of interest or relevance to them. Also AD2 (Meaningful assessment), as the students were undertaking an important skill that would be important to them in their future assessments and professional life as a critic of texts and literature. For students of Creative Writing, the skill was important to self-critique their own work.

Barriers were mostly student negative perceptions of peer-feedback activities. The approach did take up time in taught sessions, though this was deemed to be a valuable use of that time. The assignments were more difficult to mark, as they were on a range of different texts, rather than one text that was familiar to the lecturers. |

Figure 1: Moore, G. M., Audrey, S., Barker, M., Bond, L., Bonell, C., Hardeman, W., Moore, L., O'Cathain, A., Tinati, T., Wight, D., & Baird, J. (2015). Process evaluation of complex interventions: Medical Research Council Guidance. *BMJ 2015;* 3350:h1258

Assessing the Impact of your Intervention: Key findings

Prompts	Key questions	Please add some thoughts/experiences/reflections in this column
How successful was the approach? *Did it engage the students and staff you wanted it to?*	To what extent did your intervention reach your intended audience of staff and students? Was it manageable? Are there plans to test it more widely?	Very successful. Went through a few iterations, but the students were really engaged when going through the assessment criteria. It benefitted them seeing the concepts. Peer review task helped them see the approach the other students were doing too. Questionnaires for self-reported understanding showed significant improvement. Average module marks were improved.
What was the impact on students? *Note any reported impacts on students:* *Did those who did engage do better than those who did not?* *Did it narrow gaps in attainment between more and less advantaged students?* *Student beliefs about their role in assessment* *Student confidence* *Student learning outcomes* *Student engagement in assessment* *Student satisfaction* *Assessment Literacy* *Ability to use, seek and give feedback* *Contribution to assessment resources and valuable outputs*	What were the impacts on students? Did all students benefit equally? What specific changes resulted if any? Any unexpected outcomes?	Higher marks for the module. Confidence of the criteria and textual analysis. Increased understanding of the marking criteria. Increased confidence in their self-criticality. Before and after comparisons are still being gathered, but the indications are that there is an improvement of the mark. Understanding of marking criteria was a stark contrast and difference
What was the impact on staff? *Impact on staff engagement in training* *Did it impact staff conceptions of assessment and the role of students in the process?* *Did it make assessment more efficient?* *Staff competency* *Staff confidence* *Staff collaboration* *Staff assessment literacy* *Better assessment design?* *Did it lead to better curriculum design*	What were the impacts on staff? Do staff have a better understanding of assessment? Was assessment design improved as a consequence of what you did?	Staff loved reading the engaged comments that followed the essay. You could see that the whole process was coming full circle. The students were thinking carefully and well about their work in a critical way. It was very gratifying to see that.
How sustainable do you think these changes can be? *Are changes embedded within curriculum? Any longer term gains?* *Development of effective assessment networks* *Changes in attitudes?*	Sustainability: any longer term gains from the project? Has what you implemented become part of business as usual – will it be maintained?	Very sustainable. Although it was slightly more work for the staff, it was also more enjoyable and interesting to mark, and the students were more engaged. There were also fewer questions from students, which meant the overall workload of mid-assessment support reduced.

Upskilling of staff *More efficient use of resource* *Impacts on policy?*		
What did YOU gain from this experience? *What personal learning do you take away from the project?* *(Use reflective templates to support evaluative activities)*	What was the impact on those colleagues and students leading the case studies? What were the key learning points? What would you have done differently in retrospect? How could you improve your design?	Getting the students to be self-critical, and understand the role of the peer review process. It was good to see that the recent cohort understood the importance of this, and not just an opportunity to get formative feedback.
Any general thoughts or advice about using the EAT framework? *What are the key messages that would be useful for others trying to do this?*	Transferability Were there any subject specific findings that have relevance to the sector? How can learning be adapted and utilized elsewhere? What are the key messages/learning from this work?	It was worthwhile, and could easily be applied to more modules. The approach helps students understand their own learning. Approach was to pick and choose elements that were needed. How much you are willing to change and how much you are going to be able to achieve. Tried to hit as many aspects as possible, but with sustainability as a major consideration. So sensible and pragmatic. So doing what was manageable, and not focusing on too much or one aspect. So fit it to the needs and the capabilities . The EAT Framework is quite holistic and so any area will impact on other areas, because of inter-relatedess. Students understand WHY they are being asked to do the things they are being asked to do. Not just a tick-box exercise. Showed in comments from students that they understood the benefit of this. Need to show it's not going to massively increase their workload, but will benefit students and staff.