The EAT Framework: Considerations for Programme Leaders and their students

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The EAT framework demonstrates a research-informed integrated and holistic approach to assessment and feedback practices. It has evolved from extensive research on assessment feedback (Evans, 2013) and use in practice within higher education institutions (HEIs). EAT (Evans, 2016) is underpinned by a Personal Learning Styles Pedagogy approach (PSLP) (Waring & Evans, 2015).

EAT includes three core dimensions of practice: assessment literacy, feedback, and design. The framework in drawing on the PLSP stresses the importance of *agency, collaboration*, and *sensitivity* to the needs of the context (discipline; programme etc.) to support the development of strong student-lecturer partnerships in order to build student self-regulatory capacity in assessment feedback. EAT can be used to explore assessment practice at a variety of levels in order to identify and act on assessment priorities (individual; discipline; faculty; university). **(Please see the full EAT guide for details of how to use the framework which can be accessed by emailing rapcom@soton.ac.uk).**

Using the EAT framework from programme lead/faculty/university perspectives highlights scaling-up considerations: *"We must find ways to stimulate and scale change across institutions-as well as to sustain those changes-if we are to create models that serve the expanding needs of our learners…"* This leads to the core question of "…*Where should we put strategic and sustainable efforts to improve uneven performance and variable outcomes."* (Ward, 2013)

Key Considerations Part 1 (read in conjunction with EAT cards)

1. **Rationale and goals**. Is the key driver/ rationale underpinning change to assessment and feedback practices clear to all? Are short and long-term goals transparent? Using the EAT framework it is possible to identify measured steps and "quick gains" that can be achieved that are aligned to longer term goals. A key question is how priorities are being identified and communicated?

2. **Being clear about the essential elements of a scaling-up initiative** is critical (Gabriel, 2014). The EAT Framework's essential elements are: (i) **inclusivity** with an emphasis on developing autonomy and agency for staff and students in the promotion of self-regulatory learning behaviours as part of a universal design approach; (ii) the **integrated holistic framework** considering all dimensions of assessment practice; (iii) **theoretical underpinnings** (cognitive constructivist and social constructivist/social-critical theoretical perspectives (PLSP, Waring & Evans)).

3. **Developing shared understandings from staff and student perspectives about "what constitutes good and how this can be developed**." A key tenet of the EAT framework is the importance of exploring stakeholder beliefs and values about assessment practices to
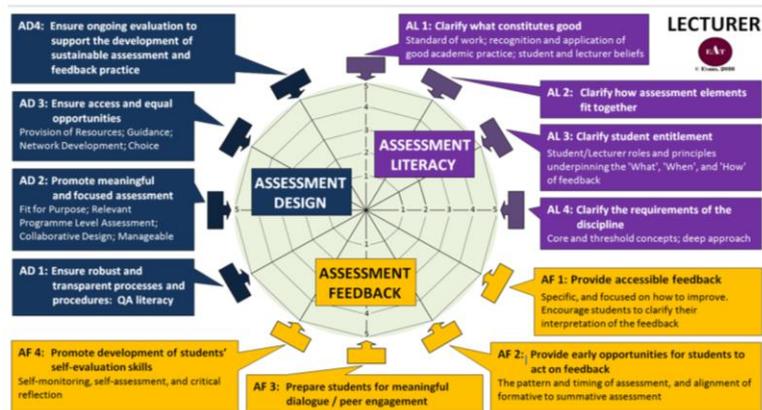
ensure buy-in and ownership of ideas (The EAT framework has identified principles of effective assessment and feedback practice based on extensive reviews of the literature and practice-based evidence (see Evans, 2016, p.15; Evans, 2013; Evans, et al., 2015).

4. **Alignment with institutional priorities and structures**. The EAT framework supports the development of manageable and sustainable assessment feedback practices. Aligning the framework with institutional/faculty/programme priorities with top-down and bottom-up support involving the engagement of senior leaders, students, and staff is important along with integrating the framework into existing structures to ensure its inclusion in the "institutional HE fabric" and to avoid duplication of effort (Hounsell & Rigby, 2013).

5. Building a **community of practice and shared ownership of the initiative**. In developing a holistic approach to assessment, bringing teams together to explore at programme level how assessment can work most effectively is imperative (Bass, 2012). A key element of this work is on-going focused training and support using research-informed evidence nuanced to the requirements of the context/discipline (Evans et al., 2015). Identification of advocates, clarifying the mechanisms for how networks are to be created, maintained, and developed are all fundamental to the longer–term sustainability of the initiative.

6. **Reward**. Individual (staff and student) recognition and reward for engagement in the development of assessment practices should be an integral part of HEI reward structures. Ensuring manageability and efficiency are key concerns within the EAT framework mindful of the competing pressures on colleagues' time from research, leadership, and enterprise activities in addition to teaching commitments. An effective "one-stop shop" website to pool resources, encourage collaboration, promote shared understandings, and to provide links to key areas of activity is essential.

7. **Measuring what is meaningful.** Relevant learning gain measures should be an integral part of holistic assessment designs and they should be subject to on-going evaluation and review by staff and students. The effectiveness of the overarching assessment feedback strategy in meeting immediate and longer term goals requires iterative analysis to enable fine-tuning and attention to the requirements of the disciplines. A critical pedagogy perspective, that considers who is advantaged and disadvantaged by assessment practices, is required in order to address differential learning outcomes (Mountford Zimdars et al., 2015; Waring & Evans, 2015).

References

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ACCESSING THE EAT RESOURCES

If you would like access to the full EAT resources. Please send an email to the researching assessment practices community at rapcom@soton.ac.uk

Can you please read below and confirm you are content to receive the materials as described below:

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The documents under (EAT, Evans, 2016) include:
Appendix A   Principles of Effective Assessment Feedback Practice
Appendix B   EAT areas document
Appendix C   EAT scoring document
Appendix C   EAT scoring document (black and white version)
Appendix D   EAT areas student document
Appendix E   EAT scoring student document
Appendix E   EAT scoring student document (black and white version)
Appendix F   Decision-making cards x 12 for each of the EAT dimensions

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