▶ Assessment and feedback on placement: international perspectives

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Deakin University acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the unceded lands, skies and waterways on which Deakin students, staff and communities come together.

We pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country, and Wurundjeri Country where our campuses are located.

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Outline

- Authentic assessment

- Challenges of authentic assessment on placement
  - Narrow competencies assessed
  - Lack of resonance with student goals and aspirations
  - Role of industry
  - Incorporating the digital
  - Inclusion and assessment

- Concluding thoughts
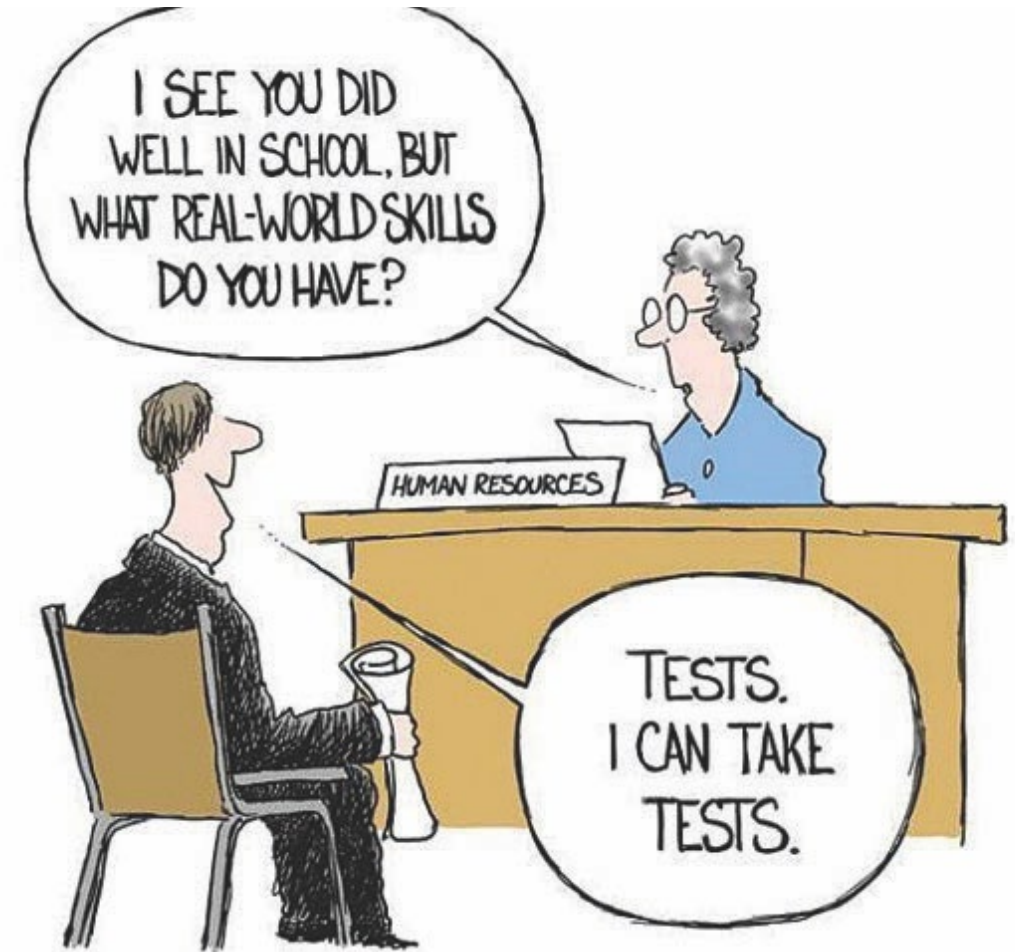
Placements are important for achieving mastery of a practice, orienting to profession, gaining employability capabilities

While the activities on a placement tend to be rich, diverse and complex. Assessment might be more of a challenge

Assessment is important because it drives student learning

Assessment on placement is complex as it involves parties and settings external to the university, and it can be problematic because of difficulties in aligning learning activities during placements with what is or can be assessed by the university
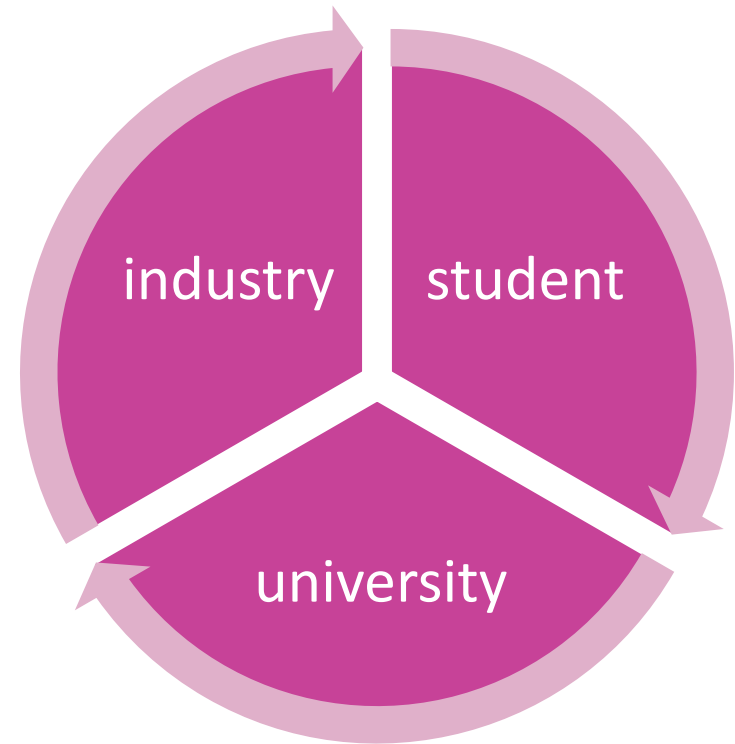
Authentic assessment

'appropriate, meaningful, significant, and worthwhile forms of human accomplishment' (Newmann & Archbald,1992, p. 71)

Challenge: narrow capabilities measured

Examples of assessment design

Learning plan and articulation of agreed goals

Written reflection on workplace activities and learning

Project reports

+/- artefacts from the workplace (e.g. lesson plan)

+/- assessment and feedback from industry supervisor

(Fern and Moore 2012)

(Mis)alignment between placement activities and assessment activities

- performance-based assessment well aligned
- wide range of competencies learned but assessment tasks focused on a narrow genre of report writing or *reflective* writing
- leading to instrumentalism

Assessment as an artificial exercise—jumping through hoops not meaningful to them

When assessment is perceived to be driven by the university and its accreditation requirements, and decoupled from the world of practice, it can lead to cynicism and 'ticking boxes' by students and industry supervisors (Elmholdt et al., 2016)

My major is health promotion but I was placed in the disability sector, so I had to relate [standards framework] and [placement provider] to the social model of health. So that was kind of like taking a health promotion perspective … That was good, but I only just mentioned it in the reflective journal and they're like, "Okay, yeah. Tick, that's fine". It wasn't a whole lot of learning towards my major. (P02 – Health elective)

The rubric for my assignment is very much focused on our understanding of the structure of a lesson plan and what needs to be in a lesson plan to teach an effective lesson rather than how we actually personally taught it and how we found the lesson plan either stayed the same or changed during the lesson. (P09 -Education)

There was nothing in my report where I had to say this is how you analyse a patient legislation or this is how you go to court or stuff like that … I hated the assessment. I thought it was pointless … it really had nothing to do with enhancing my knowledge. (P10 – Law)

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Suggestions

- Blueprint against the broader range of capabilities and learning outcomes

- Students need to be scaffolded to construct alignment

- McArthur et al. (2021) found that students often do not associate an assessment task with its social purposes, even when it seems to explicitly deal with a social need. Need to make what is implicit and, of social worth, explicit.

- Need to understand the student experience to judge authenticity

- Assessment of process and product

Challenge: alignment with student need and aspiration

(Mis)alignment between assessment activities and future selves

- value of WIL assessment was oriented to future selves
- no choice of learning goals and learning plan
- assessment placed them in student role

[The assessment] was about setting my goals for placement. Just before I go for placement, I have to set myself two goals to achieve during placement, so based on that I'm actually evaluating myself if I have achieved that goal. (P06 - Education)

You have to write up your like learning plan before you go. So, I set up all of those goals initially, and then throughout the placement, then I would check in with my supervisor and I'd say, "Look, we still haven't done this" or, "I wanna do this" or, "How could I do that?" So that worked really well. (P13 - Health)

Suggestions

- Opening up assessment to include some choice and autonomy

- Learning plans that incorporate student goals – can be useful if used iteratively

- Jury is out on reflective summative assessment

Challenge: role of industry

Authentic Assessment Framework

1) student engagement in workplace context/audience

2) high quality cognitive engagement

3) student reflexively evaluates performance

4) industry contributes to assessment

(Bosco and Ferns, 2014)

(Mis)alignment between the university and industry roles and practices

- mismatch between what they were taught at the university and how it was practised at the workplace
- learning regarding local enactments and variability of practice were not capitalised on
- assessment mostly university driven
- leading to cynicism

The university's assessment is quite specific in the written element, so we don't have control over how we're assessed I suppose. I would have liked to have somebody [to] observe how I acted in the classroom, as opposed to how I have described in text how I acted. [My supervisor] wrote a report but it does not contribute to my scoring of the unit, which is really disappointing because you work really hard to pass the report but it's a hurdle requirement so the actual report doesn't contribute to your grade. (P08 – Education)

'I would prefer to be assessed on my physical work in the kindergarten and the assessment reports that they write up of me and then my supervisor's observations to be more valuable in terms of how it credits the unit.'

The way we're taught to document here at Uni, and then you go out into the workplace, it's like, not necessarily the same at all. So that's frustrating when you're getting assessed at Uni and you've gotta tick these boxes, but it's like, that's not even the way they do it in real life. (P13 - Health)

Additional challenges...

- Effective WIL is reliant on good partnerships between university, industry and students

- Working with multiple supervisors lack of shared expectations and standards: shared understanding of the assessment tool and the standard

- Industry supervisors tend to be more lenient in their marking (Jackson 2018)

- Tendency towards failure to fail

- But students are sensitive to the role of the industry supervisor in assessment – not just formative, not just feedback.

Suggestions: Role of industry

Advisory board

Involved in design of the task/quality criteria/exemplars

Involved in moderation activities

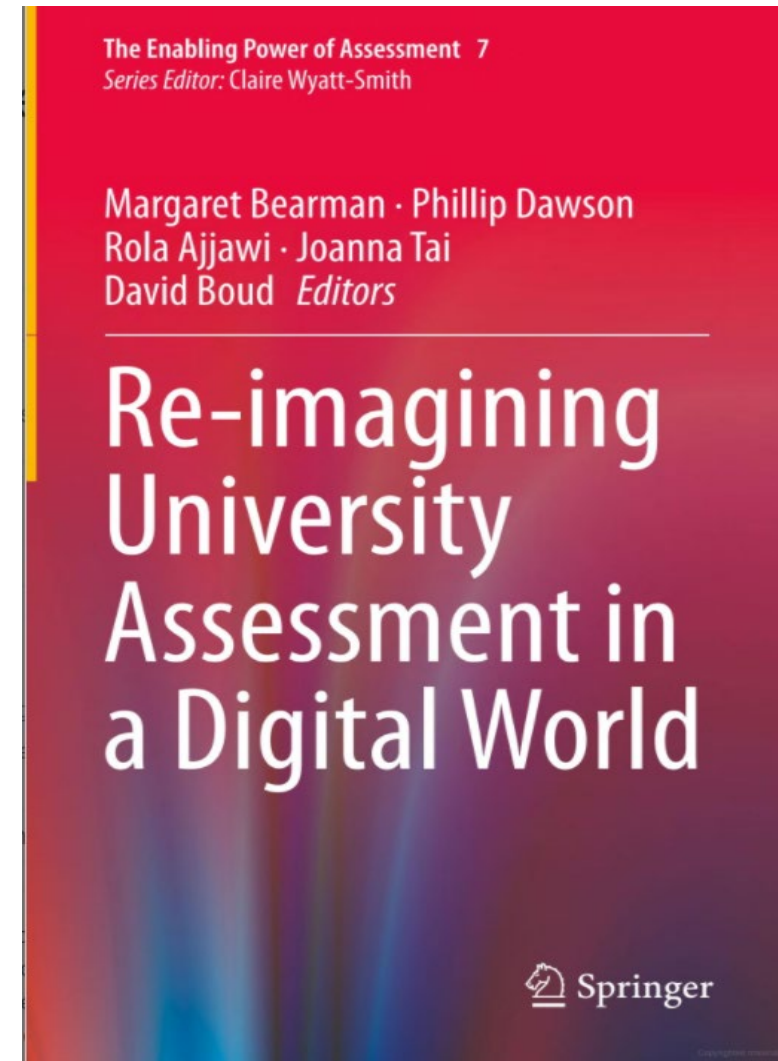Involved in judgements of the work/ feedback with students

Participatory in project work and problem solving

Challenge: the role of the digital

'Future-authentic' assessment "faithfully represents not just the current realities of the discipline in practice, but the likely future realities of that discipline."
(Dawson and Bearman 2020)

Thus the digital is both a technology and a social practice

The term *the digital* "reflects the duality of the digital being both a technology and a social practice. The digital therefore also encompasses practices that are necessary for living with technology, such as for example teamwork and collaboration, that do not in and of themselves focus on using technology."

(Bearman, Nieminen & Ajjawi 2023)

Little attention has been paid to the digital in authentic assessment

Ashford-Rowe et al's framework (2014): no mention of the digital

Villarroel et al's framework (2018): no mention of the digital

Sokhanvar et al's review of employability skills (2021): no mention of the digital

Critical scoping review: How has the digital been designed into authentic assessment?

An analysis of 55 studies on authentic assessment in higher education that had a central role of the digital in assessment design (1993-2021).

(Niemenin, Bearman & Ajjawi 2023)

Purposes of assessment for a digital world
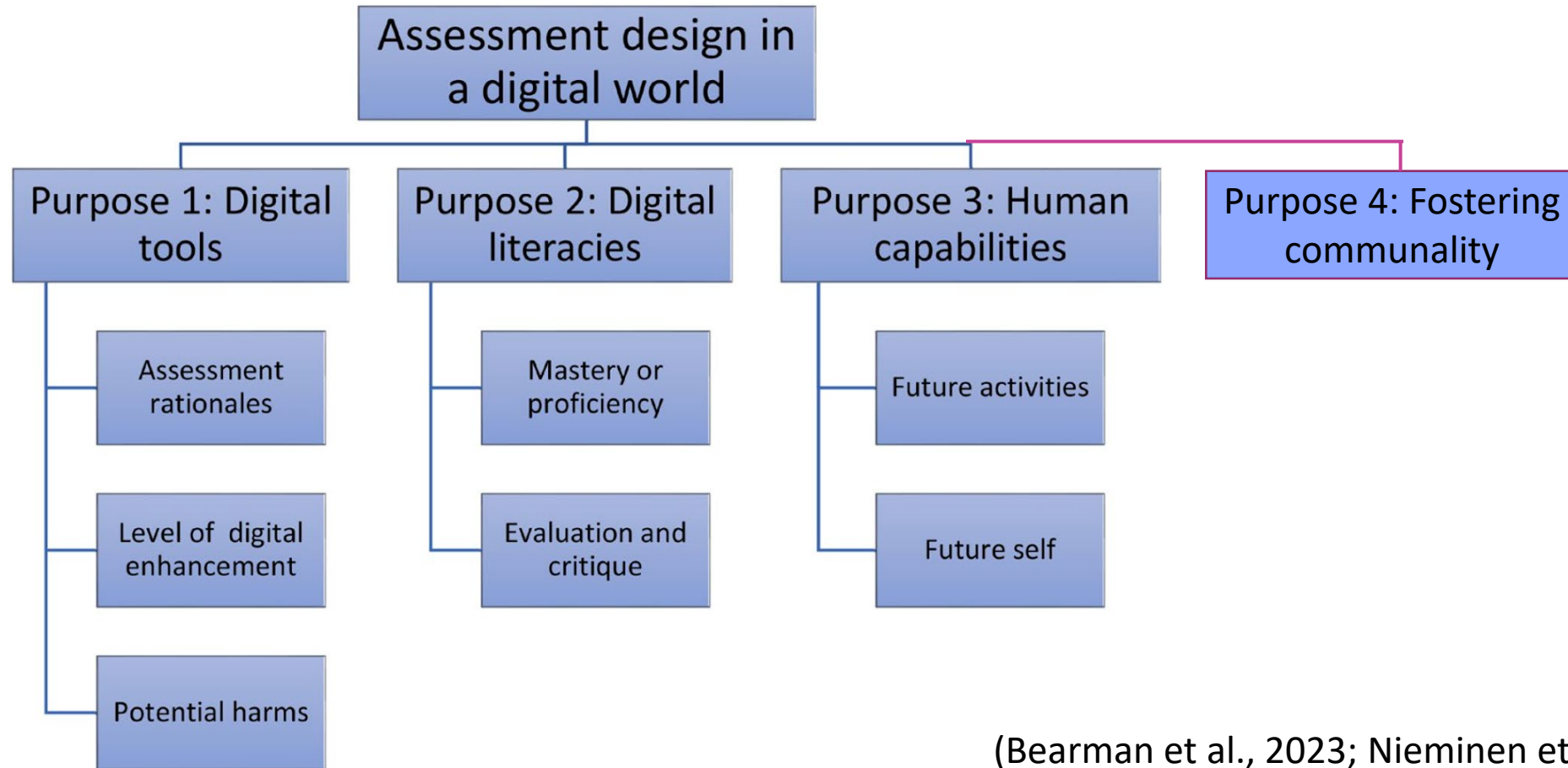
(Bearman et al., 2023; Nieminen et al., 2023)

Challenge: inclusive assessment

Students with disability

- are more likely to be in unstable employment including periods of disengagement and unemployment (Lamb et al., 2015; Ranasinghe et al., 2019)

- Lower full-time employment rates than those without disability (58.7 per cent and 70 per cent respectively) (QILT, 2021).

- Face significant barriers in developing their employability, including barriers to participation in internships and placements

- Higher proportions of graduates with disability (46 per cent) are in a job that does not fully utilise kills or education, when compared with graduates (42 per cent) without disability (QILT, 2021)

Negotiating disclosure

Students with disabilities shoulder an unfair responsibility in their work placement experiences, where they must negotiate the decision of disclosure and/or request for accommodations

(Dollinger et al., 2023a, b)

For my in-class assessments and in final exams I have the provision of extra-time. When I will be working, I will have to complete my projects before the deadline. During my placement, the safety-net of extra-time will be absent. If my colleagues know about my disability, then there is a fear of being an outcast. My disability cannot be seen so, I am afraid if people will think that I am lying

It's just so exhausting. It's like mentally fatiguing all the time because, for me, I'm trying to reserve my energy for placement and all of the activities that I need to do. It's also stressing if they're going to change their mind or opinion about me and what I'm capable of, and that fear of maybe they don't actually want me here because it's too stressful (Devin).

- Students reported hostile work placement environments, and cultures of exclusion, demanding more investigation into how universities can ensure safe and appropriate learning environments for students on placement.

- Students recommend greater education and training for placement teams and industry supervisors to reduce stigma and combat entrenched assumptions about disability.

- Universities themselves must also reflect and act on how to support inclusive cultures, including supporting training and policy that embed a strengths-based lens of disabilities.

Final thoughts

...authentic assessment that engages students

1. Creates spaces for students to inject themselves in – so the task resonates in some way

2. Enables student agency to prompt change in the world (work and/or society and/or discipline)

3. Builds criticality and evaluative judgement over a series of task across a degree

4. Creates opportunities for dialogue about assessment so that relevance and meaning is shared

Assessing
work-integrated
learning programs:

a guide to effective assessment design

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