

ASKe

KEY MESSAGES

- Interactions within a learning community, both formal and informal, promote student learning (*Astin, 1993; O'Donovan et al, 2008*)
- Assessment and pedagogic literacy among staff and students are prerequisites for increased effectiveness of assessment and feedback (*Price et al, 2010*)
- Understanding and exploiting the relational and dialogic nature of feedback leads to effective student engagement and learning (*Price et al, 2010*)
- Assessment and feedback processes that support student learning need to be coherent and integrated into the learning process (*Price et al, in press*)
- There are no simple, quick and easy solutions to most assessment and feedback problems (*Price et al, in press; O'Donovan et al, 2008*)
- There are very few economies of scale available in assessment and feedback (*Gibbs, 2006*)
- Students need to actively use assessment standards in order to fully understand them (*Rust et al, 2003*)
- To be effective, assessment must be recognised as a joint responsibility between staff and students (*Rust et al, 2005*)

The ASKe Key Messages with full references can be seen on our website.



ASKe has made a tangible impact on my institution and, I suspect, an impact across the sector. I do not see how the practice-based work can be as effective as it has been without the research activities in place as well. ASKe's research work gives the practice-based work credibility.

Dr Greg Benfield
Educational Developer (Learning Technologies),
OCSLD, Oxford Brookes University

ASKe has contributed to the development of my practice as a teacher. I am mindful of the influence 'assessment' has on me as a tutor and strive to make it as engaging and meaningful experience for students which enhances their nursing practice.

Ms Jill Pawlyn
Placement Lead and Senior Lecturer in Learning
Disability Nursing, Oxford Brookes University

Thursday 9 June 2011
ASKe Plagiarism Event
See website for details in the New Year.

Thursday 14 December 2010
Seminar:
The cultivated community approach taken to develop academic standards for business disciplines
by Mark Freeman,
Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching),
University of Sydney
12:00-13:00 PG201,
Postgraduate Centre
Wheatley Campus
Email to register: nranjit@brookes.ac.uk



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ASKe:

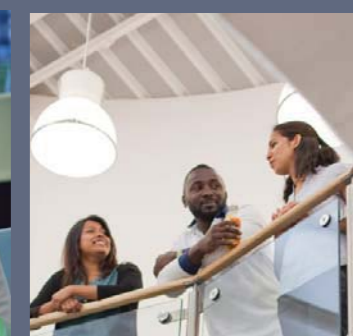
CETL overview 2005-10

Our work goes on!

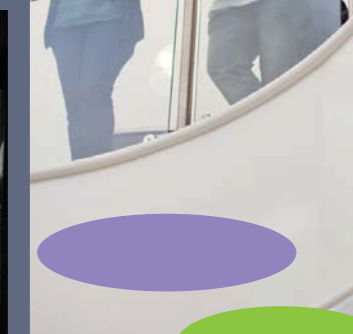
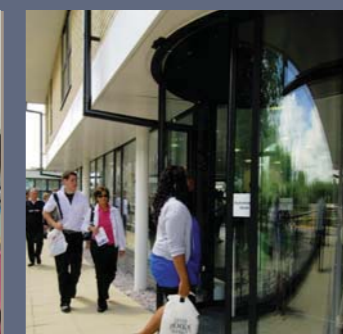
Nov 2007:
Weston Manor Group,
world class experts
on assessment, produce
Assessments
Standards
Manifesto



75
keynote
presentations
delivered



10
123 leaflets
produced, over
24,000 distributed



Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange

ASKe Personal Statement



I think it is fair to say we have come a long way in five years and hopefully we have brought some of you along with us too. In the spirit of the innovative CETL initiative, we used the opportunity of five years of HEFCE funding not just to embed our original ideas in practice but to further explore these ideas, question assumptions and use different lenses to get to the heart of assessment and feedback problems. That isn't to say we are claiming to have all the answers but our thinking has certainly moved on as we have grappled with the complexity of assessment theory and practice.



Professor Margaret Price

IN THIS FINAL NEWSLETTER we will track the key developments in our thinking through a look back at what we did and why and, as a result, what we are doing next.

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS of ASKe have, in one sense, flown past but in another we have travelled such a distance and achieved so much that life before ASKe is becoming a distant memory. The saying goes 'time really flies when you are enjoying yourself' and it is undeniable that these five years have been really enjoyable. It would be extremely surprising if an opportunity to become engrossed in a subject, to work with colleagues throughout the sector, to have an opportunity to influence national agendas and international discussions, and, most importantly, to make a significant contribution to improving the student learning experience was not an enjoyable experience.

100+
modules supported by
Module Assistants
working with staff.

ASKe OBJECTIVES 2005-10

- 1** Embed current evidence-based excellent practice
- 2** Develop pioneering evidence-based practice
- 3** Cultivate an inclusive community of assessment practice
- 4** Inform, inspire and support the wider community of HE staff and students
- 5** Reward and recognise excellence in assessment

IN WRITING BIDS there is always a temptation to promise a lot to impress the funder but in the CETL bid process there was an emphasis not only on products but also on risk and innovation and to us that meant ideas. Promising to deliver ideas, their development, testing and promulgation meant that we were offering what we thrive on and our experience in ASKe has always been too many ideas rather than too few. Our aim was, through creative thinking, robust research and evaluation, to produce a range of initiatives for embedding in courses, both in Brookes and elsewhere, to improve the student learning experience. Our previous work had shown that assessment standards were not as transparent as the sector liked to assume, however a belief in the complete effectiveness of explicit criteria and level descriptors had taken hold. This needed to be addressed but how? Through changing practice in the classroom, persuading teachers to make minor changes to their practice and seeking to involve students in the learning community to accelerate their understanding of assessment.

WITH GRASSROOTS CHANGE to practice we had aimed to start locally with a plan to move outwards to other institutions later but found



ourselves generating interest across the sector almost from the start. We responded to where demand seemed to exist, providing workshops and developing our 123 leaflets; the first one proposed a change to classroom practice to support students understanding of assessment standards. This was change happening at a module level as we had planned but was it enough? We were successful in persuading individual practitioners but discovered that this was not a sustainable model; every change in module/course leadership brought a new need for persuasion and support. What would happen after five years?

June 2009:
Osney Orange Group,
23 specialists, produce
**Feedback: An Agenda
for Change**

26
Conference
abstracts accepted

WE OFFERED STAFF DEVELOPMENT workshops and realised that many practitioners, rather than just being hungry for hints and tips, respond with interest and enthusiasm if given the background theory to use and apply in their own disciplines and contexts. However, unless attendance was championed by senior management, the workshops tended to attract those already looking for ideas to improve their practice. So again were we making a lasting difference?

MEANWHILE WE WERE PURSUING our work in increasing student engagement in the community of assessment practice. We often debated whether such a community exists. The learning community was in operation but did it have an assessment community within it or was it the same thing? It was unclear how it was open to student participation or how often and seriously it discussed assessment standards. Increasing student involvement in the community through peer assisted learning schemes, as module leader assistants and as technical advisers in the new social learning centre brought students closer to 'the other side' of the assessment discourse. How could we bring this to a larger number of students?

1500

students across four
Oxford Brookes schools
offered opportunity to
participate in
**PAL: Peer Assisted
Learning**

ALL THESE QUESTIONS meant that we needed to take new perspectives and expand our horizons. By this time we had absorbed and were developing the work of our previous project on engaging students with assessment feedback which had reinforced our views about the importance of learning relationships, dialogue and learning across a programme rather than in a module. Change needed to be embedded in programmes to make it sustainable and meaningful for students. Our opportunity came when Brookes decided to restructure all its programmes and accepted our recommendations. Those programmes have now recruited and the first cohort of students enrolled. Needless to say we have a project to monitor success.



Human Fruit Machine, Wheatley Carnival 2010

IN THE PROCESS of addressing these questions we realised that working with practitioners alone is not enough to deal with complex issues and bring about sustainable change. We synthesized our ideas with those of other researchers and writers and raised our sights to a higher level. The 'Assessment Standards Manifesto' and 'Feedback: An Agenda for Change' were addressed to the whole sector (institutions, funding bodies, quality agencies, professional bodies) calling for change in practices. There is a hunger in the sector for change, not least to address the dissatisfaction around assessment and feedback expressed by both staff and students. The ideas in the documents fed into national debates, including the Parliamentary Select Committee (IUSS) looking at universities and students, and several institutions around the world began to use the Manifesto and Agenda.

IUSS March 2010: oral evidence given to the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Select Committee inquiry into 'Students and Universities.'

IN BROOKES, senior management championed the development and implementation of the Brookes Assessment Compact, drafted by ASKe. This document makes no pretence that issues around assessment are simple but it does make clear that successful assessment experience involves a partnership between staff and students and contribution from both parties. The implementation of the Compact is providing a great insight into the levels of staff and students' understanding of assessment.

SO WHILST WE HAVE TO CONFESS we did deviate from our original plans, I think we exceeded them! We have come to the end of HEFCE funding at a point where we have concluded that assessment literacy lies at the heart of better, more effective assessment processes and greater clarity and confidence in assessment standards. Staff can begin to develop such literacy in their training for teaching and their induction into the disciplinary communities

but students need their acquisition of assessment literacy supported and accelerated if they are quickly to be effective self-directed learners. **ASKe has built up considerable knowledge and know-how about sharing standards within the learning community which is central to the development of assessment literacy. Our future work will build on this** as well as enhancing student involvement. As a starter for this we are in the process of writing 'ASKe – the Book' on developing assessment literacy in students.

Informing wider sector:
46 news articles featured in THES, The Guardian and The Australian

SO, WHILST SIGNIFICANTLY SMALLER in scale, **ASKe's work continues in conjunction with the newly formed Oxford Brookes Business School Pedagogy Research Centre which will continue to build an evidence base to inform initiatives to enhance the student learning experience.** We will not be producing any more newsletters but our website will be maintained and we will continue our innovative range of resources including our popular 123 leaflets. We hope to see you at our events and look forward to future collaboration with you.

Professor Margaret Price

150 colleagues attended Assessment Design Intensives from all Schools across the University



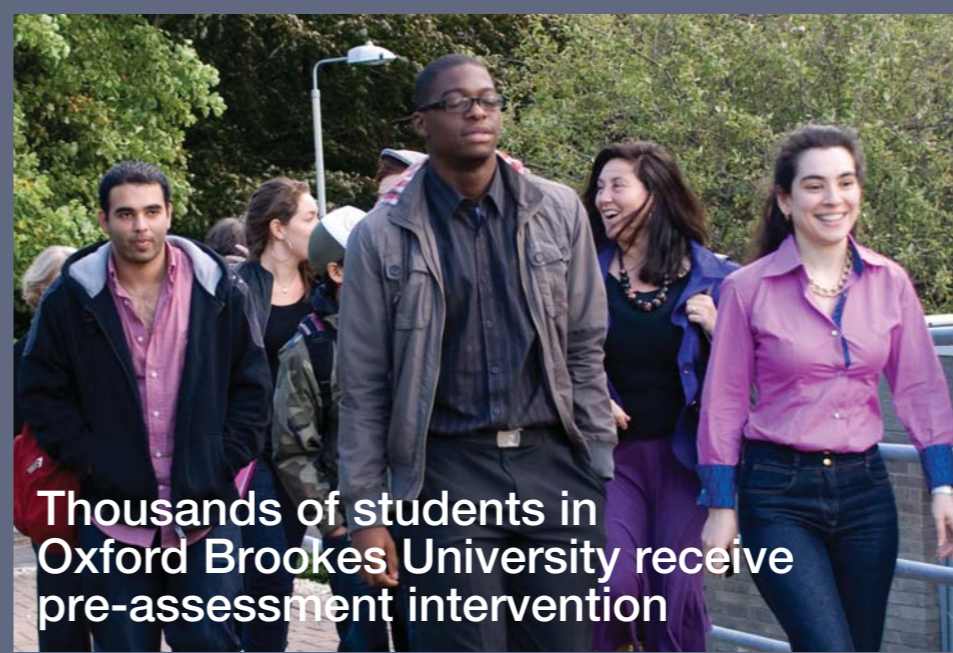
Dear ASKe, What an outstanding resource-base you have produced. Thank you.
Glynis Cousin, Director, Institute for Learning Enhancement, University of Wolverhampton



September 2009 Brookes' Assessment Compact implemented

over 70 papers published

1800 ASKe Business School Undergraduate Student Diaries distributed



Thousands of students in Oxford Brookes University receive pre-assessment intervention

4 annual plagiarism events, each attracting 80 external delegates

271 students have taken the ASKe-devised **Planning a Successful Event** module

160 workshops given

At Brookes, your work has done a tremendous amount to raise the profile, debate and knowledge around assessment and feedback, and programme teams are now in the position of being able to bring pressure to bear on colleagues to change their ways.
Associate Professor Valerie Clifford
Affiliate Oxford Brookes University, Visiting Fellow CAPRI (Centre for Academic Practice and Research in Internationalisation), Leeds Metropolitan University

ASKe: Our impact and reach

My experience with ASKe is twofold. First, in my teaching practice I have found ASKe's work on ways of helping staff and students develop a common understanding of academic standards incredibly insightful. For example, the ASKe leaflets for staff and students start with the common difficulties staff and students experience and then offer the 1, 2, 3 steps to overcome these issues in an easy to use and highly effective way. Second, I have had the pleasure of attending conference presentations, lectures and seminars by Professor Margaret Price and found her insights into best practices for assessment to be very helpful. She has challenged my ideas around assessment and expanded my understanding which has been extremely useful in both my research and my teaching practices in relationship to assessment. Working with Margaret on a research project on assessment standards has been an enjoyable and productive experience. She truly is an expert in her field and is able and willing to share her expertise with others.

Dr Rosina Mladenovic

BCom MCom (Hons) MEd PhD UNSW FCPA,
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Economics and
Business, The University of Sydney

Being a member of the ASKe community became more than a job to me. Within the community I was a Casual Technical Adviser based in the Simon Williams Undergraduate Centre, aiding students with computer technical and general enquiries. Working as part of this team really provided me with a great opportunity of meeting new students on a daily basis and essentially becoming a part of their positive student experience. Not only having this great opportunity of working alongside my peers, we all shared the same passion of learning to use the new technology that was introduced into the Business School and pass on this knowledge to other students helping them to leverage their potential of creating their presentations to the highest level possible.

Sara Kennou

Oxford Brookes School of Technology
Undergraduate

I am grateful for the opportunities I have had to take part in some of the events that ASKe has organised. ASKe has managed to get together researchers from around the world. It has given me the chance to meet people in very friendly, but academically challenging discussions. I am impressed by how ASKe has been able to take a leading role as change agent in higher education, internationally as well as nationally. It has also been a pleasure to visit ASKe and work with ASKe staff. I hope you will find ways of keeping up your good work in the future.

Professor Anton Havnes

Oslo University College, Norway

ASKe has always been an integral part of my student life and it has certainly made my experience richer. Active participation in its numerous projects such as PAL, Module Assisting, various workshops and focus groups has significantly enhanced my skills, increased self-awareness and helped me develop personally. As a PAL Leader, I have built up the confidence to lead and motivate others. I met a number of wonderful people who became close friends. I believe that these kind of projects make studying at Oxford Brookes University Business School a unique experience.

Assel Maidanova

Oxford Brookes Business School
Undergraduate

Working as a researcher for ASKe has been a fantastic experience. The projects have been interesting and diverse and provided many opportunities for development of my research and writing skills. I have enjoyed interviewing members of staff, running numerous student focus groups, observing classes, designing questionnaires, analysing data, writing reports and journal articles and presenting at conferences. The ASKe team has created a nurturing work environment where a shared commitment to improving the student experience is the driving force behind everything we do.

Birgit den Outer

ASKe Research Assistant

ASKe's ideas have definitely contributed to the development of programme learning and teaching strategies.

Our whole team's courses have all been designed/redesigned on the basis of ASKe's work on learning outcomes and assessment.

Teresa Finlay

Senior Lecturer in Health Care Practice,
School of Health & Social Care,
Oxford Brookes University

I have become more assessment-literate than I was pre-ASKe. ASKe has made a significant difference to our practice.

Fiona Gilbert

Undergraduate In-session Manager,
International Centre, Oxford Brookes
University

I was fortunate enough to spend my placement year at ASKe, in which I gained a lot of invaluable experiences and beneficial skills that may have otherwise been unattainable. Soon after I joined the friendly ASKe team, I was encouraged to take on different responsibilities and involvement in a variety of projects that had direct contributions in creating better student experiences in universities, both nationally and internationally.

Working in ASKe has enriched my understanding on how to utilise quality assessment and feedback as a student, and I transferred that knowledge into my academic study to gain further successes. My year in ASKe was a priceless opportunity; it built up my confidence and provided clearer direction to pursue my future educational and career plans.

Queenie Leung

Oxford Brookes Business School
Undergraduate

ASKe has been a hugely successful CETL that has had an impact on assessment practice at a range of levels. For example:

- ASKe's research has enriched the debate about assessment and standards in HE. This research and scholarship has made a significant contribution to my own development as an assessment researcher.
- The Weston Manor Symposium and the Osney Grange Symposium created rich opportunities to distil and disseminate evidence-based best practice in the areas of assessment and feedback.
- I have found ASKe's resources really useful for my teaching on our university's Post Graduate Certificate of Academic Practice. Participants have found the 123 leaflets really accessible and useful.
- The Weston Manor Manifesto has been discussed across our university at course team level right up to Academic Board. This document has offered a useful reference point for our assessment enhancement.
- When the university held its assessment focused Learning and Teaching conference Professor Chris Rust was the key note speaker. Long after his lecture his input has been referred to in a number of contexts: for example, his ideas have inspired our art and design colleagues to redesign assessment approaches in year one.

Professor Susan Orr

Deputy Dean Faculty of Arts, National Teaching
Fellow, York St John University

Speak to busy academics about developing their assessment practice and often they will cite a need for hints and tips or short case studies. The ASKe CETL have responded to this request (see, for example, the range of 123 leaflets), but they have painstakingly ensured that the advice (hints and tips etc) is overlaid on numerous research informed principles.

To my mind the ASKe CETL have set out a significant marker in the way to engage and support staff, leading to developments in assessment practice, without shying away for the need for evidenced informed practice.

As a member of the ASKe steering group and an academic with a belief that good assessment is the right of all our students, ASKe's approach has not only stimulated my own thinking and ways of working, but doubtless those of others too across the sector.

Mark B Russell PhD

Deputy Director of the Blended
Learning Unit, University of Hertfordshire

The ASKe CETL has been successful in raising the profile of assessment and standards in higher education not only in the UK but internationally. I personally have been heartened to participate in various ASKe events, for two key reasons. First, the various people involved in the core of ASKe have focused on problems that are of high importance to students, especially their focus on making assessment work effectively for improving student learning. Second, they have done this in a way which has demonstrated the right mix of academic scholarship in assessment with practical approaches that work with university teachers. I have not only been delighted to be associated with their directions but also counted it a privilege to engage with them as academic colleagues. Although ASKe has been based in the Business School, they have positively encouraged engagement with their work from across a range of disciplines. The legacy of their work will be long-lasting.

Professor D Royce Sadler

Griffith University, Australia