### Assessment of learning in the context of equity and power

Literature Review

Attention to the ways of assessing student learning is a central element of inclusive teaching, particularly when attention is given to the importance of language and literacies for learning. There is a significant body of literature that laments assessment that is based on tacit and unclear understandings of what counts as ‘good’ assessed work (Lea & Street, 1998; Smith, 2004; Green, 2011; Clughen & Hardy, 2012) and impoverished feedback (Beaumont et al., 2011; Tuck, 2012; Harman & McDowell, 2011; Buchanan, Ljungdahl & Maher, 2015;), although there is also literature that speaks from the lecturer-assessor’s perspective and critiques the work involved in offering feedback and different levels of student uptake of that feedback (Bailey & Garner, 2010; Price, Handley & Millar, 2011; Tuck, 2012, 2013).

The literature included in this review that attends to the issues connected with assessment examines the importance of clarity in communicating what is expected. For example, Devlin & O’Shea’s (2012) research into effective teaching and learning for/with low SES students reports that having available and enthusiastic teachers was the most significant factor cited by students who had completed Year 1 of their undergraduate degree; teachers’ ‘communication skills’ were the third most commonly reported factor, which was particularly the case when it came to the clarity of assessment criteria**.** Similarly, Trevor Gale (2011b) argues that there are three narratives that guide principles for inclusive teaching (‘teaching for equity’) which align with the findings in Devlin & O’Shea (2012): the diversity of learners needs to be considered in curriculum and pedagogy, active engagement with students is necessary (through pedagogy), and assessment should be explicitly and clearly linked to pedagogy.

Assessment has also been a focus in the literature that attends to particular equity groups. For example, Kent’s (2016) work on access and participation in online learning for students with disabilities illustrates how assumptions about assessment can impede their success. For instance, assessment in the form of on-campus, invigilated exams can be difficult to access for people who have limited mobility or transport issues, not to mention being incongruent with the mode of delivery (online). Moreover, for students who have mental health issues, the imposition of (multiple) deadlines and narrow frames of what ‘counts’ can cause stress, and group work assignments need to be carefully designed to allow for the possibility of accommodation. Kent argues that these issues need to be carefully attended to, as well as revising extension policies to ensure they are flexible and responsive to students’ needs. Slee’s (2010) essay on the alignment of a culturally responsive program for teacher training Indigenous students in the Northern Territory, which includes ‘culturally responsive assessment practices’, exposes similar tensions. Her analysis of the ‘Growing Own Our’ program and the institution’s policy on assessment were in conflict because of the narrow view of assessment instantiated in policy. Slee makes a series of recommendations to permit the flexibility to build culturally responsive forms of pedagogy and assessment, such as allowing teaching assistants to work as group to meet the criteria of one task (to design, make and appraise a teaching aid) rather than doing it individually, so that their ‘communitarian’ ethos (Bunda, Zipin & Brennan, 2012) is valorised, and by explicitly drawing on knowledge of elders (lecturers and students) to design, deliver and evaluate the program. The tension between prescriptive institutional guidelines on assessment, based on notions of fairness and impartiality and the experience of designing assessments that demonstrate a holistic understanding of ‘assessment literacies’ (see Willis, Adie & Klenowski, 2013).

For students entering higher education from ‘alternative pathways’, adapting to university assessment epistemologies and practices are often challenging. This is particularly the case for students who use the TAFE pathway to access higher education studies because of the wholesale epistemological differences between competency-based training (TAFE) and graded assessment (university), which involves not only different ways of assessing learning, but also different literacies, different practices and qualitatively different views of what counts as knowledge (Wheelahan, 2009; Pardy & Seddon, 2011; Tranter, 2012; Weadon & Baker, 2014; Delly, 2015). Ambrose et al.’s (2013) study of how academic language and literacies staff can facilitate the transitions for students moving from TAFE to higher education more effectively also identified incongruities between cultures of learning, literacies, and assessment practices. They argue that to counter these issues, TAFE students need more carefully scaffolded orientations – especially for Diploma students moving into Year 2 of undergraduate study. More importantly, university lecturers should explicitly expect to teach students who have not previously studied at university; therefore, they need to unpack their own assumptions of who is in their class and about what students ‘should be able to do’. This could be enacted in the pedagogic environment by revising all core ‘skills’, which would arguably aid all students after a long break between academic years.

Another assessment-related concern that is noted in the literature reviewed here is that of diagnostic testing. Similar to the discussions about open access programs that impose no pre-requisite entry qualifications, there are ethical, logistical and equity issues at play here. The work of Neil Murray (for example, Klinger & Murray, 2012; Murray, 2013) has examined the efficacy of implementing a Post-Enrolment Language Assessment (PELA) as a means of identifying ‘at risk’ students who require additional support with their learning, language and literacies to succeed in their studies. As well as considering the potential institutional risk and kudos that a PELA might bring, Klinger & Murray question who should be asked to take the PELA: who are the at-risk groups? They make the point that If the PELA is elective, some ‘at-risk’ students may not be assessed; thus “the only watertight alternative is to test *all* newly enrolled students” (p.306), but this would be (more) expensive and logistically complicated. Murray explicates further in his 2013 paper, arguing that implementing a PELA needs broad consultation throughout and within institutions; “Only then can institutions feel confident they are meeting their ethical and educational responsibilities to those non-traditional student cohorts whose interests they espouse, and whose successes or failures both during and following their studies will reflect on their graduating universities” (p.309).

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**Equity and Higher Education Annotated Bibliography Series**

**Assessment of learning in the context of equity and power**

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| **Citation** | **Annotation** |
| Ashworth, M.; Bloxham, S. & Pearce, L. (2010). [Examining the tension between academic standards and inclusion for disabled students: the impact of marking on individual academics’ frameworks for assessment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248963324_Examining_the_tension_between_academic_standards_and_inclusion_for_disabled_students_The_impact_on_marking_of_individual_academics%27_frameworks_for_assessment), *Studies in Higher Education,* 35(2), 209–223.UKAnnotation written by Anna Xavier Keywords: *Assessment; widening participation; disabled students; marking; inclusion*  | **Context:** Developments in HE have often resulted in ‘a tension between widening participation and maintaining academic standards’ (p. 209) (Riddell et al., 2007). Ways to safeguard academic standards while ensuring inclusion has often been debated among both policy makers and researchers (Quality Assurance Agency, 2006; Bloxham, 2009). **Aim:** This article aims to explore the impact of staff values regarding WP on marking by drawing on developing theory regarding assessment ((Shay 2005; O’Donovan, Price, and Rust 2008; Sadler 2009). It reports on an ‘innovative creative arts module delivered for students with complex disabilities’ (abstract), which aimed to contribute towards inclusion by adjusting curriculum and assessment design for students with complex disabilities. **Theoretical framework:** Not specified in study. **Methodology:** A qualitative, ethnographic approach was employed, with a case study methodology. Data collection methods employed include: 1)a review of the literature and other documents relevant to the study; 2) observation of the programme in action; 3) interviews with academic staff, students and support staff; 4) recordings of two academic team discussions (university and college tutors); 5)a questionnaire on moderation issues for the two university tutors. Participants: Students (n=6) with multiple disabilities caused by cerebral palsy, causing severe impact on speech, mobility and motor skills. Module employed: Designed particularly for six students from college with no formal qualifications, but possessed experience in creative work; delivered alternately at college & university campus; students were accompanied to campus by individual key workers. **Findings:** Findings show a generally positive attitude regarding the module outcomes; a recurring theme among individual students was ‘the thrill of HE’ (p. 215); students appreciated ‘being part of the ‘real world’, working in an institution with a professional purpose’ with matching facilities; the findings also highlight the ‘inseparable dilemma’ (p. 216) of course tutors in categorising achievement under conventional marking standards within the specialised context; support workers felt unprepared to be learning facilitators on a HE course; tutors also faced difficulties in capturing the evidence of learning for students whom standard learning communication methods are highly inappropriate. The difficulty the students faced in providing oral or written expressions resulted in the staff using ‘subtle and ephemeral’ forms of expression as evidence of prominent thinking. The perceived difference in students’ perspective compared to their non-disabled peers led tutors to recast student achievement as ‘different’ instead of ‘inferior’ (p. 218). Tutors’ view of students being disadvantaged in the context of the module criteria also led to narrowed expectations of what was considered ‘fair’ (p. 218). In terms of the coursework’s reflective element, tutors directed their assessment towards the students’ ability to choose resources, and the application of their thought processes to work in relation to the theme. Nevertheless, despite the reasonable adjustments incorporated, tutors believed that there were ‘undeniable limits’ to the achievement of students with disability within the criteria and standards of the module implemented. **Discussion:** The study indicates that the notion of ‘reasonable adjustments’ to teaching and assessment oversimplifies the barriers presented by the complex disabilities for students in learning. However, academic staff in this study appeared to interpret semantically ‘loose’ learning outcomes and grade descriptors in the light of a new shared ‘standards framework’ for interpreting the existing criteria (p. 220). This framework appears to combine the ‘need to maintain ‘standards’ with positive values regarding inclusion, a willingness to change expectations in the light of students’ disabilities, and an openness to recognising learning however it reveals itself’ (p. 220). **Core argument:** Assessment in practice is neither ‘objectivist [n]or relativist. It is contextual, experiential, and, perhaps most importantly, value based’ (Shay, 2004, p. 325). While values are transparent relation to the assessment of students with complex disabilities, this case serves to highlight the role of values in many marking judgements in HE.  |
| Fisher, R., J. Cavanagh, and A. Bowles. (2011). [Assisting Transition to University: Using Assessment as a Formative Learning Tool](https://srhe.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02602930903308241), *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 36(2), 225–237.AUSAnnotation written by Caitlyn McLoughlinKeywords: *formative assessment; summative assessment; draft assessment; learning; transition* | **Context:** Transition to first-year university studies can be stressful for students and is generally when the risk is highest for students discontinuing study. Early intervention – particularly by enabling student participation in learning – from faculty and staff has been shown to greatly improve student experience and likelihood of remaining at uni. **Aim:** To “present an approach that is designed to address issues of transition to university through the lens of engagement and formative assessment” (p.225).**Methodology:** Multi-method approach of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis undertaken as a case study. **Findings:** Students who participated in the intervention achieved higher marks and grades (7.1% higher) than non-participating students in the first subject where the intervention was offered. Three main themes from the qualitative research designated as: (1) improving marks, (2) enabling understanding, and (3) utility of the intervention in transition. **Core argument:** Intervention facilitates significantly higher marks in assessments and grades, while assisting student learning overall. |
| Gravett, K. & Winstone, N. (2018). ‘Feedback interpreters’: the role of learning development professionals in facilitating university students’ engagement with feedback, *Teaching in Higher Education,* UKAnnotation written by Sally BakerKeywords: *Assessment feedback; learning development; higher education; student engagement* | **Context:** Addresses the lack of research into learning developers working with feedback – authors point to challenges created by ‘hidden recipience’ of feedback, and the lack of information we have about what students do with it. Authors argue that there is little known about the role of learning advisors in helping students to understand/use feedback. Literature review of barriers to using feedback (decoding jargon-heavy feedback, interpreting minimal notes, strategies for acting on feedback) + literature on related impact on motivation and affect**Aim:** To explore learning developers’ “insights into the barriers students confront when engaging with feedback, and into the role of learning developers within the feedback landscape” (abstract); to “explore students’ use of feedback from the perception of this core group of higher education professionals” (p.2).**Methodology:** Qualitative; interviews with learning developers (n=9) from an English university around these topics: “(1) perceptions of what makes ‘good’ feedback; (2) the nature of discussions when students attend for learning advice appointments, including the issues they raise and the emotions they express; and (3) a description of a specific instance when a student came to a learning advice session to discuss feedback on their work” (p.5)**Findings:** Two broad themes: 1) barriers for students (including decoding language, applying feedback, motivation, and self-efficacy) and 2) various roles played by learning advisors (interpreter, coach, dialogue partner, listener, and intermediary). *Barriers*: decoding the language used within feedback (described as “academic speak” by one participant), and some of the learning advisors reported they also sometimes struggle with the language used. Participants also noted issues with transferability of feedback, and with feeling anxious about asking for clarification from the marker because of power relations. Participants also discussed observing the very emotional reactions that students can have to receiving feedback.*Roles played*: **interpreter** = “sees learning developers taking what are perceived to be opaque feedback comments, and supporting students to translate comments into more easily understandable language” (p.9) – as a go-between. **Coach** = giving students techniques to understand and operationalize feedback, and to take a more holistic approach to interpreting feedback. **Intermediary** = ‘middle ground’ between students and faculty in ways that were described as anonymous, safe and confidential. Learning developer = seen as ‘quasi academics’, and as such occupy the ‘third space’ (Whitchurch, 2008): “On one level then, the learning developer can be perceived as situated in between the boundaries of student and lecturer. Yet on another level the learning developer role could be viewed as blurring the boundaries between clearly defined institutional domains, as both learning developer and academic staff work to support students to develop their assessment literacy” (p.10). **Source of feedback dialogue** = offering a space for discussion and dialogue, which offers an opportunity for clarifying misunderstandings |
| Kaur, A., Noman, M. & Nordin, H. (2017). [Inclusive assessment for linguistically diverse learners in higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02602938.2016.1187250?src=recsys&journalCode=caeh20), *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(5), 756-771. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2016.1187250 MYAnnotation by Anna Xavier Keywords: *inclusive assessment; linguistically diverse learners; design-based research; student–faculty partnership* | **Context:** The increasing student diversity in HE institutions has led to an ‘emerging need for an inclusive approach in assessment for accessibility, opportunity, relevance and engagement’ (abstract). However, developing inclusive for CALD learners has always been critically challenging for educators (Commins & Miramontes, 2006). The study is set in Malaysia, a multicultural country, with linguistic diversity, including in public institutes of HE, where students also have varying levels of English language proficiency. **Aim:** To describe a study which explored the experiences of students with a new form of assessment in a HE institution in Malaysia. **Theoretical frame:** Social development theory (Erikson, 1956) – ‘two important elements that contribute towards identity development in the late adolescent period are a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing with others’; Cognitive development theory (Piaget, 1971) – disequilibrium (discontinuity & discrepancy) stimulates cognitive growth. **Methodology:** Design-based research methodology (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003); Research setting – Large public university in Malaysia; total student population: Approximately 35,000; Participants: In-service teachers (n=114); age range: 28 – 40 years old; Degree: Masters of Education; Stage: Third/fourth semester of programme; First language: Majority reported Malay, followed by Tamil & Chinese; English language skills: varied; Procedure & Data Collection (3 phases): Phase 1 (Design) – Collaboration between researchers & students to identify assessment methods that students found appropriate for an ‘inclusive and fair assessment’ (p. 761); data collected method – two focus groups (to discuss issues faced in regular group work assessment methods & develop an alternative protocol to implement group work assessment to overcome these issues); Phase 2 (Implementation) – Homogenous groups were formed based on students’ linguistic abilities, expertise (if any), gender and number of group members (Data collected via questionnaire on students’ language-related information); Group assessment structure: Students were allowed to use varied modalities to present their task; each student was required to submit a brief report on contribution made & level of understanding on topic worked on; each activity was assessment by both the group members & other group members; Rubric for peer evaluation – guidelines by Baker (2008) were followed; Three sets of scores were obtained – individual scores by group members, group scores by other groups. Individual scores by course instructor; Final score – derived from all three sources – a) average individual score: given by group members (max value – 25); b) group score given by other groups (max value – 25); c)individual score by the instructor (max value – 15); Total marks converted to percentage; Period of assessment – Four weeks to prepare of group task; Week 5 – group task activity started; Each session- Presentation by two groups; Phase 3 (Evaluation) – Week 13: Students were informed on composite marks; Week 14: Evaluation of student experience; Data collection methods: Open-ended questionnaire – based on main RQ (experience with new form of assessment activity); Face-to-face interviews (n=12); Data analysis – Random questionnaire transcripts were selected to match with video recording of group activities for triangulation purposes (Merriam, 2009). **Findings:** 1)Positive learning environment – most common response; adjectives uses: ‘welcoming’, ‘friendly’, ‘comfortable compared to regular ways’(p. 764); students appreciated a ‘less structured & more flexible classroom experience’ (p. 764); 2)Sense of relatedness – students developed a ‘sense of relatedness’ for both peers & instructors (p. 764); working together as a team helped students form a bond with each other; guidelines developed collaboratively eliminated any ‘role ambiguity for contributions’ (p. 764) in groups; collegial work environment – developed mutual understanding & respect; quality interaction during task preparation – nurtured stronger bond between students; 3)Increased self-esteem – Students perceived themselves as being able to contribute positively, which also developed their sense of competence; the opportunity to select their language and mode of presentation also provided students a sense of agency; 4)Motivation & engagement for better effort – Students reported increase ‘motivation, enjoyment and less pressure’ (p. 765); which indicated an increased motivation level; expressions of accountability & determination also reflected students’ engagement in the assessment task; 5)Effective learning – The creation & implementation of the assessment was a significant learning process for students; students also experienced ‘deep learning’ (p. 766) while preparing on a topic for presentation; Varying modalities of presentation also contributed towards students’ comprehension of the content, & developed creativity and innovation, resulting in ‘meaningful learning experiences’ (p. 766); 6)Fairness & bias – Students were content with the new assessment form (perceived the final score to be a closer reflection of their learning); autonomy to selected and work with their preferred mode was a key factor in students experiencing ‘fairness’ (p. 766); a few students indicated concerns regarding peer assessment – students might be biased to their peers; 7)Time consuming – Students expressed concern on time & effort required by the processes involved with the new assessment form; 8) Accommodation challenges – Unexpected attitudes from some students (dissatisfaction in having to ‘work harder’ to accommodate students who have difficulty expressing comprehension in a ‘straightforward manner’ (p. 767). **Core argument:** Despite several challenges and concerns regarding the new assessment form, the significant benefits indicated by the findings of the study suggest that the assessment practices employed in the study could be beneficial for all students, and make a valuable contribution to inclusive assessment.  |
| Murray, N. (2013). [Widening participation and English language proficiency: a convergence with implications for assessment practices in higher education](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2011.580838), *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(2), 299–311.AUSAnnotation written by Sally BakerKeywords: *widening participation; English language proficiency; post-enrolment; language assessment; language competence of non-traditional students* | **Context:** Explores interconnections between WP agenda and English language proficiency (assessment and support) in context of diverse student population (as a result of massification). Examines the efficacy and argues for/against the use of post-enrolment English assessments (PELAs). Interconnection between WP & language proficiency = not restricted to NESB, although NESB is often focus. Issues with proficiency prevail despite entry requirements leading to some teachers ‘toning down’ their courses to accommodate linguistically diverse cohort [but this is not often the case; perhaps tutors are toning down marks/grades]. For students, lower than needed proficiency leads to attrition, lack of engagement, stigma, “potential source of real trauma”, reinforcing “latent feelings of a lack of self-efficacy” and can lead to issues getting work after graduating (p.300). Policy context = DEEWR doc ‘Good practice principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities’. English language also aligned with national economic (neoliberal goals) in Bradley Review (p.xi). **However**, English proficiency causes issues for native speakers too (acknowledged in DEEWR doc): Native speakers (inc. domestic LBOTE students) often not asked to demonstrate ‘adequate’ proficiency (p.302): “few if any students, whether native speakers or NESB, domestic or international, will come adequately equipped with the specific set of academic literacy practices they require for their particular degree” (p.303) – makes case for embedding ac lits into curriculum based on notion that “subject lecturers can reasonably be expected to have an implicit knowledge of the academic literacies and communication skills [of their discipline]… many will require professional development by English language and communication specialists to help them articulate and acquire a good understanding of [what they] demonstrate unconsciously on a daily basis, along with the associated pedagogies for their delivery” (p.304). Embedding = acknowledged as likely to be challenging and long-term, requiring cultural change; argument made that if done sensitively and collaboratively, it will reduce need for English language specialists and professional development (as new academics replace old) if embedding/ awareness raising = common place in academic teaching courses.**Aim:** To consider some issues related to the implementation of post-enrolment English tests**Theoretical frame:** Draws on own posited notion (Murray, 2010) of language proficiency as composed of three intersecting but distinct components: proficiency as “a set of generic skills and abilities” (grammar, punctuation, fluency, skills), academic literacy (refs to Lea & Street) and professional communication skills [prosaic, pragmatic features?]. Uses word ‘skills’ a lot**Methodology:** Essay**Core argument:** How to implement PELAs? Need to be cost-efficient and bring required improvements (p.305). Need to think about validity and reliability of assessment design (definition of valid PELA offered on p.307), but also think about the potential reputational risk/ kudos that PELA could bring: English language learners may look on it favourably (if follow-up provision also provided) or less favourably. Poses questions: what should be tested, who should be tested and how should they be tested? Proficiency can be the “only sensible focus” given that academic literacy and professional communication should be taught as part of course. Issues: how to identify who to test? Who are the at-risk groups? Who might slip through the net? If PELA is elective, some ‘at-risk’ students may not be assessed; thus “the only watertight alternative is to test *all* newly enrolled students” (p.306) – but this would be (more) expensive and logistically complicated. Alternative to PELA (as a test) is to use early piece of assessed work as diagnostic (under controlled conditions and within prescribed rubric/ length rules). This would have to be conducted early enough for support needs to be identified and implemented. Who would mark? Faculty staff or English language specialists? Needs broad consultation within institutions: “Only then can institutions feel confident they are meeting their ethical and educational responsibilities to those non-traditional student cohorts whose interests they espouse, and whose successes or failures both during and following their studies will reflect on their graduating universities” (p.309). |
| Ryan, T. & Henderson, M. (2017). [Feeling feedback: students’ emotional responses to educator feedback](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2017.1416456), *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* AUSAnnotation written by Sally BakerKeywords: *Assessment feedback; international students; grade expectations; negative emotion; individual differences* | **Context:** Emotional dimensions of feedback; assessment —central aspect in student satisfaction (as evidenced by its frequency in student experience surveys). Students’ receptiveness to feedback received = impaired if negative emotions are generated, particularly if there is an absence of dialogue. Authors focus on two groups of students: international students, and students who receive marks they are unhappy with. Authors review of literature on international students highlights the role of language and culture in taking up feedback (e.g. Warner & Miller, 2015), which can impact on their emotions; the review of ‘underperforming students’ suggests that many students internalise feelings of shame/ sadness, or get angry (because of perceived unfairness).**Aim:** To respond to two hypotheses:“H1: International students are more likely than domestic students to find the feedback comments they generally receive at university to be discouraging, upsetting and too critical.H2: International students who speak languages other than English at home are more likely than domestic students who speak languages other than English at home to agree that the feedback comments they generally receive at university are discouraging, upsetting and too critical” (p.4).**Methodology:** “Large-scale cross-sectional survey” conducted in two Australian universities with students (n=4514) – see p.5 for details of scales included.**Findings:** Majority of students = rarely or never discouraged by feedback42.6% of international students = occasionally/ frequently/always discouraged, compared with 35.4% of domestic students24.4% of international students ‘strongly agreed’ that feedback = too critical (compared to 13.5% domestic)19.8% of international students ‘strongly agreed’ that feedback = too upsetting (compared to 12.5% domestic)Students who received lower marks than expected = “more likely to feel sadness, anger and shame due to the feedback comments” (p.10)**Core argument:** Students should not be treated as homogenous because this study supports the idea that international and domestic students respond to feedback differently |
| Tett, L.; Hounsell, J.; Christie, H.; Cree, V. & McCune, V. (2012). [Learning from feedback? Mature students’ experiences of assessment in higher education](https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2011.627174), *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 17(2), 247–260.UKKeywords: *assessment; feeding forward; mature students* | **Context:** Mature age students entering an elite Scottish institution via FE college; role played by assessment on their experiences of university study. Authors note literature that points to importance of feedback on assessment for retention, and the context of assessment as persistent area of concern in National Student Survey**Aims:** To illuminate “aspects of learning from feedback from the perspective of students whose pre-university experiences of assessment provided a major contrast to that of the majority of their peers” (abstract)**Theoretical frame:****Methodology:** Longitudinal qualitative study of students’ transitions from FE into elite HE; paper reports on data collected via multiple interviews with subset of mature age students with childcare responsibilities (n=16, see p.248 for overview)**Findings:** *Initial feelings about assessment*: considerable disconnections between expectations and experiences, which authors note are particularly marked for these ‘non-traditional’ students. Participants discussed the contrasts between FE and university in terms of no opportunities for inter-draft feedback, lesser guidance (less from tutors, less information in assignment briefs), new types of assessment tasks.*Experiences of assessment in Year 1*: student expectations of feedback impacted on how they used it/ how useful they found it. Authors discuss participants’ experiences/ perceptions of finding supportive peers/ doing group work. This can be great, but can also be isolating.*Experiences of assessment in middle years*: can be where differing expectations of feedback between tutors and students can be most significant/ do damage. Example of student who found the grades much lower/ assessment more difficult to reconcile at university than FE, and describing ‘I just put masses of work into it and hope for the best’, which leads authors to suggest that “a sizeable minority of students appeared to be progressing through their course of study with- out a clear understanding of what was required to improve their expressed cognitive skills” (p.252). Student data also suggested that by mid-way, students still weren’t sure how to use the feedback to improve their work, illustrating the importance of tutors dedicating time to “the importance of making sure that students understand what is being said and are willing to accept that it is fair” (p.253). Authors also note the emotional dimension of receiving feedback.*Experiences of assessment in final year*: Suggestion that by the final year, students had shifted their view of tutors/ feedback to supporting independent learning, with students describing heightened understanding of what was expected of them. Students also noted that the timing of multiple assignments made life more difficult for them, but also described strategies to manage competing demands on time.**Core argument:** For feedback to facilitate transition, it “needs to relate explicitly to students’ expectations if they are to learn from it” (p.257). Relationship between assessment and feedback (and tutors and students) = particularly dynamic for WP students, who have less familiarity with the system and practices, and who are therefore “were disadvantaged by their lack of knowledge of the system and were adjusting to a very different support and assessment regime” (p.257). Authors identify the challenges with feeding-forward (as opposed to feedback), meaning “that teaching staff should encourage an orientation towards learning goals through clear and timely comments where students use feedback to increase their understanding” (p.258). |
| Torrance, H. (2007). [Assessment as learning? How the use of explicit learning objectives, assessment criteria and feedback in post‐secondary education and training can come to dominate learning](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/27399696_Assessment_as_learning_How_the_use_of_explicit_learning_objectives_assessment_criteria_and_feedback_in_post-secondary_education_and_training_can_come_to_dominate_learning), *Assessment in Education*, 14(3), 281–294.UKAnnotation written by Sally Baker | **Context:** Formative assessment in post-compulsory education and training. Calls to shift from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning. Author argues that while formative assessment has an increased role in post-secondary education (including A-levels, NVQs, Access, Basic Skills and Community Education), it is most commonly conceived in terms of criteria compliance and award achievement (p.282), which conversely promotes more reliance on tutors, rather than more autonomy and self-determination. Approaches towards transparency, such as exam coaching and practice, have resulted in more instrumentalism: “This might be characterized as a move from assessment of learning, through the currently popular idea of assessment for learning, to assessment as learning, where assessment procedures and practices come completely to dominate the learning experience, and ‘criteria compliance’ comes to replace ‘learning’” (p.282)**Aim:** **Methodology:** Case study approach (‘vertical investigations’ – from awarding body through institution to learner). Interviews with learners (n=237) and ‘assessors’ (n=95) + survey responses (n=260)**Findings:** Achievement described in narrow and instrumental terms: “securing the evidence to complete a portfolio and/or the ‘necessary’ or ‘expected’ grades to accomplish an award” (p.284).Failure = defined as not completing the award/ not securing the needed grades.Author notes how modularized courses (such as A-levels) allow students to game the system by retaking assessments to get better grades. Also, tutors break down assessments and assessment codes to help students, and also by them marking for exam boards: “Such involvement helps to develop teachers’ understanding of the assessment process and criteria which, in turn, they pass on to students through exam coaching” (p.285).Author argues that coaching in itself is not inappropriate, but it can create/ contribute to inequitable conditions.Assessment as learning is where “assessment procedures and processes completely dominat[e] the teaching and learning experience” (p.291)**Core argument:** Formative assessment is useful but “Making learning objectives and instructional processes more explicit calls into question the validity and worthwhileness of the outcomes achieved” (p.291). |
| Torrance, H. (2017). [Blaming the victim: assessment, examinations, and the responsibilisation of students and teachers in neo-liberal governance](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01596306.2015.1104854), *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 38(1), 83–96.UKAnnotation written by Sally BakerKeywords: *Neoliberalism; responsibilisation; assessment; accountability; school-reform* | **Context:** Examinations in UK schooling. Offers a historical account of assessment, with examinations in 1860s to 1960s used as educational technology to make selections about who would get to participate in further/ higher education when educational opportunities were fewer; as such “this process functioned to identify, and legitimate on grounds of educational merit, the identification of the next cohort of suitably qualified and socialised personnel for economic and social leadership roles in society” (p.84). Assessment therefore = “technology of exclusion” (p.84). Since massification of education systems, assessment = converted into ‘technology of inclusion’. From social justice perspective, argument = “we need our assessment systems to identify and report what students can do, rather than what they cannot” (p.85), through explication and transparent use of assessment criteria. Alignment of neoliberal and social justice arguments, “specific technical and procedural innovations in assessment theory and practice” are needed (p.85).**Aim:** To explore “the role of assessment in relation to issues of social and political governance” (p.83); to argue that the “role, reach and discursive influence [of assessments] have expanded as education systems have expanded, and vastly increased numbers of students are exposed to the processes and consequences of assessment” (p.83)**Theoretical frame:** Foucault**Methodology:** Essay**Findings:** Massification and expansion of education systems (especially compulsory education) = lead to higher standards for more students with a proliferation of subjects, and ‘skills’ and proficiencies demanded have expanded. Education market = coupled with focus on employability and competitive economic power, so that education aligns with producing skilled workers.Assessment in age of responsibilisation: global project of curriculum and assessment reform to drive up educational standards. Increasing test results have led to concerns about falling standards. Author also points to equity concerns (test results and socioeconomic status), and issues with graduate employment pipeline/ credential creep.Examinations define the subject (e.g. history) and the ‘knowing subject’ (the individual student). Examinations are self-serving/ self-constituting in that “Examinations organise and legitimate knowledge qua knowledge,in testable form, and at one and the same time produce/endorse the fact that knowledge can be and should be tested” (p.90) = form of disciplinary power (Foucault).We are all “co-opted” into the project of assessment: we “have an ‘ interest’ in examinations continuing to exist in one form or another – teachers for purposes of student motivation and classroom control; studentsand parents for purposes of credentialism and social mobility; governments to measure educational performance and control teachers” (p.92).**Core argument:** Antithesis of modern assessment regimes = collective/ collaborative outcomes, “with much more emphasis being placed on the collective responsibility of teachers, students and their peers to understand that educational encounters are a collaborative endeavour which should produce outcomes that benefit communities as well as individuals” (p.94). |
| Tuck, J. (2018). [“I’m nobody’s Mum in this university”: The gendering of work around student writing in UK higher education](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1475158518301073), *Journal of English for Academic Purposes,* 32, 32–41.UKAnnotation written by Sally BakerKeywords: *Academic labour, Academic literacies, Care, Emotional labour, Gendering, Discourse* | **Context:** Increased diversity in student body, increased workload for academic teachers, decreased time and space; gendered dimensions of academic work. Author draws on work that argues that women are disadvantaged “by the contradictory demands of two “greedy” institutions, the family and academia” (p.33). Feminist literature on ‘emotional labour’ and care reviewed. Focus on student writing and feedback because “Work with student writing connects with a holistic but ambivalent understanding of care for a number of reasons - it is incremental, cyclical and slow, it often takes place in hidden spaces e.g. at home and in personal tutorials, often involves listening, empathy, attention to identities and meanings, and to the ‘whole person’ e the intellectual, emotional and even physical. It is also an exceptionally demanding and time-consuming aspect of the role of academics with teaching responsibilities (particularly in setting, supporting and assessing students' written work, Tuck, 2012) and frequently straddles, in both time and space, the increasingly blurred boundary between academics' working and home lives.” (p.33).**Aim:** To respond to two RQs:“How do academic teachers' discourses and practices contribute to and reflect the gendering of academic work around student writing in the disciplines?What are the consequences of such gendering?” (p.35)**Theoretical frame:** Academic Literacies; **Methodology:** Author makes the argument that it’s difficult to study gender ‘head on’ because “subtle gendering processes which are often practiced with only “liminal awareness” (Martin, 2006, p.258)” (p.34). Paper draws from author’s PhD research on academics work with student writing; author notes that the study did not explicitly set out to examine gender, but it “emerged as significant in the form of feminising discourses of writing work which became evident as the project unfolded, surfacing in the form of familial analogies and nurturing imagery in the words of participants” (p.34).**Findings:** Themes: work around writing on work/life boundary; work around writing on work/personal boundary; gendering work = emotional labour*Student writing/ work-life boundaries*: lived experiences of working with student writing = done “at marginal times and in marginal places” (p.35) – temporal and spatial blurring of boundaries.*Student writing/ work-personal boundaries*: student writing often happens in addition to formally ascribed duties, and “becomes squeezed into the “above and beyond”, not fully acknowledged at institutional level, but necessary to meet students' perceived needs” (p.36), particularly for sessional tutors. Author describes this as ‘shadow work’. Author also offers example of students approaching a female tutor because they don’t want to approach the (male) course leader, asking for a task translation. The accessibility and availability of tutors = connected to notion of care, as articulated by participant ‘Angela’: “*I think they [students] appreciate at some level that I'm more available to them than some of their other tutors are, possibly because of my age and because I've offered, and possibly ‘cause I'm just a little less intimidating*” (p.36).*Gendered view of work with student writing as emotional labour:* creates dilemmas and tensions between professional identities, especially for ‘research-active’ academics. Author cites examples of people finding it difficult to get people to mark dissertations; participant Pam said “*I'm nobody's Mum in this University, so when the students are begging me for things I just think I really need to direct you on to somebody else who might have more time and patience and actually get paid for it*” (on p.37). Pam goes on to argue that students need ‘somebody’ to help with writing, as do other participants. Also, the metaphor of ‘handholding’ is evoked, along with the idea that responding to students’ questions about assignments = care; conversely, the idea that there is a ‘constant stream of needy students’ perpetuates a view of students as children. This comes at a cost: physical exhaustion: “The effort of integrating intellectual and emotional labour in academic work is exhausting, not least because it is undervalued at institutional level and thus poorly resourced in institutional terms. A feminised construction of such labour, which disaggregates the emotional from the intellectual, enables lower (monetary) value to be accorded to writing work, which in part explains the persistence of such models in the managerialist university” (p.38)**Core argument:** “Data analysis in this paper points to the potentially gendered nature of writing-related work for academic teachers because it is time-consuming, potentially emotionally demanding and can involve a lot of conversation and interpersonal engagement, things which have often been associated with female labour and with ‘nurture’” (p.39). |
| Williamson, S. (2012). [Generation 1.5: The LBOTE blind spot](http://www.journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/viewArticle/195), *Journal of Academic Language & Learning,* 6(2), A1–13.AUSAnnotation written by Sally Baker | **Context:** Post Bradley Review/ Transforming Australia’s HE System, has focused attention on ‘students from disadvantaged backgrounds’ but large number of NESB/ LBOTE students continue to have issues with language proficiency and academic preparedness = “Generation 1.5 (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988), are students who migrated to Australia from a non-English speaking country during childhood” (p.1) – educators assume such students have similar language and literacies to other NES students and most literature focuses on international students. Most literature that explores Gen 1.5 is American (but see Starfield/ Chanock in Aus). Discussion of LBOTE (in all many guises) = underpinned by assumption of homogeneity (p.3). Much research fails to differentiate between international and domestic LBOTE students. Generation 1.5 often display strong oral communication and use “a rich, varied and flexible idiomatic vocabulary, complex forms and reduced forms…often without a discernable accent” (p.3) but have issues with written proficiency (grammar mentioned), making academic literacies difficult. Gen 1.5 “not necessarily literate in L1 due to very little formal education in that language” (p.4) Discussion of ‘eye’ v. ‘ear’ learning Discussion of bilingual and biliterate (related to diglossia) – students can speak two or more languages but are not literate in those languagesLanguage proficiency v. socio-demographic factors = not necessarily due to SES. Long-term migrant children may be disadvantaged with schooling by lack of parental support due to low levels of L2 proficiency (Borland & Pearce, 1997), leading to a “cultural fracture between generations which centred around the specifics of their education” (Borland & Pearce, 1997: 107, cited on p.6) – although Williamson makes point that this is not specific to LBOTE students. Silva (1993) “concluded that L2 texts are less fluent (fewer words), less accurate (more mistakes), and less effective” (cited on p.6) and L2 writing is “characterised by less use of passive voice, nominalisation and subordination (in favour of more coordination), less lexical cohesion and more reliance on conjunctive cohesion” (p.6) – this is broad and does not differentiate between international/domestic. ‘Basic writer’ v. L2 writer: Friedrich (2006): “basic writer status concerns academic development whereas ESL status is about proficiency in English” (cited p.6). Gen 1.5 very similar to ‘basic writer’ features. Williamson argues “The few differences to be found are to do with fact that Generation 1.5 students may have a potentially conflicted and ambivalent relationship between their L1, L2 and mainstream culture that could impact on their ability to succeed in first year university and that many have the added frustration of persistent ESL-type errors” (p.A7). Assumptions about monolingual academy “As a result, students’ multilingual-influenced writing is often viewed by institutions as “unwelcome deviations from a monolingual standard of English usage” (Harklau, 2003, p. 155)” – p.8)**Core argument:** “Generation 1.5 represents a significant blind spot in current discourses of social inclusion and educational disadvantage” (p.9)“The question of whether to identify as ESL or CALD at university is often a difficult one: will it afford an advantage (e.g. more accommodation given by lecturers) or will it be stigmatising?” (p.9)Academic pathways = different for Gen 1.5Gen 1.5 = ear learners who are bilingual but rarely biliterateIssue of what counts as ‘acceptable English’ needs to be debated – part of problem is neoliberal approach to commodification of education, which has forced EAP practitioners to the margins by faculty colleagues, as are LBOTE students.  |