PASS – PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Peter Hartley, Project Director,
Ruth Whitfield, Project Manager,
Centre for Educational Development, University of Bradford
Web: www.pass.brad.ac.uk  Email: pass@bradford.ac.uk
Introducing PASS

- NTFS group project over 3 years:
  - One year of investigation and analysis and then two years of development and implementation.

- Consortium:
  - Led by Bradford;
  - 2 CETLs – ASKE and AfL;
  - Plus Exeter, Plymouth and Leeds Met.
What problem are we trying to resolve?

How to design an effective, efficient, inclusive and sustainable assessment strategy that delivers the key course/programme outcomes.
Why are we investigating this?

Consider the elements buried in the project aim:

- The implications of ‘designing’.
- Effective, efficient ‘for whom’?
- The notion of ‘strategy’.
- Clarifying the purposes of ‘assessment’.
And from what perspective?

- Adopting a Programme perspective
  - programme-based
What are the issues?

See the PASS Issues Paper:

Please comment/feedback and use.

Would highlight:

- Assessment ‘drives and channels’.
- What/why are we measuring: the ‘slowly learnt’.
- Limitations of grading systems (e.g. marks are not numbers).
- Implications for course structures/regulations.
What do we hope to deliver?

- approaches to PBA;
- ‘choice and consequence’ guides;
- workshop and resources for local implementation;
- case studies from different disciplines.
Outputs to date

- General literature review;
- Students’ view of assessment strategies;
- Assessment issues;
- Medical school case study;
- Inclusive assessment;
- Survey of practice across the UK & international perspective;
- Survey of staff attitudes.
Outputs in progress

- Assessment types at professional level;
- Further case studies.
Issues to disentangle include:

- Purposes and functions of assessment;
- Assessment environments and their impact NB links with TESTA;
- Defining ‘programme-based’ assessment;
- Student perceptions and expectations;
- The need for a strategic approach;
- Grading and credit.
Defining assessment: a challenge

- program outcomes “need to be assessed in complex, multidimensional student performances”
- “Multidimensional performance entails the whole dynamic nexus of the individual’s intentions, thoughts, feelings, and construals in a dynamic line of action and his or her entanglement in an evolving situation and its broader context. Such a context may be within or across work, family, civic, or other settings.”

Starting to define PBA

How does PBA/PLA come about?

- dissatisfaction with existing assessment

leads to

need to have shared definition of outcomes

Programme/course team adopts PBA/PLA approach

- need to be supported by institutional context
- genuinely collaborative approach to curriculum design

- regulations enable range of practices
- can move from current working practices and 'ownership'

- separating study blocks and assessment blocks
  - e.g. Brunel Assessment Regulations

- 'whole programme' from scratch approach
  - e.g. Plymouth Medical School

- combinations of approaches
  - e.g. Leeds Met survey
Different varieties of PBA?

Programme/course team adopts PBA/PLA approach

- strategy re different forms of assessment
  - more use of synoptic assessment
    - e.g. assessing 80 pts of a 120 credit year through one assessment 'package'

- adopt appropriate variety/range of different social and working practices
  - starting from the practical problem of constructing a course from pre-established modules
    - e.g. assessing the general outcomes from the specific stage of the programme (focus upon stage-based assessment)
  - taking the module but replace or augment the assessment

- staff translate programme outcomes into module outcomes in a more systematic way

- integrated project

- student-centred submission of evidence to satisfy the main learning outcomes
  - often can involve portfolio choice of assessment methods
Typical student perceptions and concerns

- perceptions of ‘the course’ are variable;
- assessment experienced as ‘fragmented’;
- anxieties re move to more integrated assessment – perceived risk in terms of performance;
- concerns about feedback and timing.
An example: Peninsula Medical School

- NB Case study forthcoming from PASS

- Includes:
  - four assessment modules that run through the 5 year undergraduate medical programme and are not linked directly to specific areas of teaching
  - focus on high-quality learning (Mattick and Knight, 2007)
Issues re grading and credit

- Teaching/assessment links;
- The assessment/credit link;
- Credit cf accreditation;
- Threshold cf grades in performance.
Where next?

- Planning meeting 27 September 2010;
- Expanding case studies/examples;
- Developing an initial set of “choice and consequence” guides;
- Working with pilot programmes to inform guides and develop workshops.
And finally ...

- Visit the web site:
  - www.pass.brad.ac.uk

- Contact us at:
  - pass@bradford.ac.uk