

Engage



**An exploration of
the tutor's role**

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An exploration of the tutor's role

TUTOR COMPANION

Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning
Rhodes University, Grahamstown



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Where leaders learn

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Engage

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reflective space

Foreword

Engage offers a space for the intersection of thought and action. It seeks to serve as a nexus for authentic reflection, constructive dialogue, as well as informed and dynamic practice towards the development of student learning in tutorial spaces.

With its exploratory, experiential approach, *Engage* seeks to share ideas, provoke thought and invite questions as it accompanies student tutors through some of the issues which they may encounter during their tutoring journey. Tutors are invited to deliberate an array of points and consider how these may or may not be manifested in practice. Whether you are a new tutor wishing to engage with 'first principles', or an experienced tutor seeking to extend and consolidate your learnings, this workbook attempts to enable you as you encounter the philosophy and practice of tutoring.

Engage is designed to work as a companion text for groups of tutors as well as individual tutors, although collaboration with others is likely to strengthen engagement with the text. *Engage* also endeavours to provide a touchpoint for tutor co-ordinators and lecturers who wish to interact with notions of tutoring alongside their tutor colleagues.



Getting Started **Chapter 1**

CHAPTER 1

So...you're a tutor. Now what?

Let's get started...

What is the *purpose* of tutorials?

How do you understand the purpose of tutorials? In other words, what do you think tutorials seek to offer or provide?

Why do we have tutorials? Why do we go to the trouble of arranging timetables, preparing tutorial work and appointing tutors and tutor co-ordinators?

The purposes of small groups in teaching and learning contexts

Intellectual Purposes Small groups have the potential to...	Personal Purposes Small groups have the potential to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Develop cognitive understanding</i>• <i>Encourage the appreciation of alternative points of view</i>• <i>Change conceptions</i>• <i>Enable questioning of assumptions</i>• <i>Develop listening skills</i>• <i>Develop verbal capacities</i>• <i>Offer feedback and evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Provide opportunities for practice in self-expression</i>• <i>Develop self-awareness</i>• <i>Encourage autonomy</i>• <i>Encourage commitment</i>• <i>'Soften' defensive attitudes</i>• <i>Enhance attitudes to the discipline/field</i>
Social Purposes Small groups have the potential to...	Practical Purposes Small groups have the potential to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Encourage co-operation and an awareness of others</i>• <i>Develop a sense of social identity</i>• <i>Create a sense of belonging and community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Develop teamwork</i>• <i>Enhance problem-solving skills</i>• <i>Enable specific tasks:</i>• <i>Create products of designs</i>• <i>Write collaborative reports</i>• <i>Generate data</i>• <i>Complete complex exercises/activities</i>

Adapted from Light, G. and Cox, R., 2000, Learning and teaching in higher education. The reflective professional, 117.

The Tutor's Roles and Responsibilities

A role may be understood as the *part* someone plays or, in other words, their *function*.

Which words (below) fit with your understanding of the **tutor's role**?

Circle those which resonate with you -

teacher	leader	instructor	assessor
disciplinarian	guide	administrator	
facilitator		employee	friend
	role model	boss	mentor
expert	coach	mini-lecturer	

Can you **add** any other words to **describe** how you conceive of **your role** as tutor?

Think about your experience of being a **student in a tutorial space**.

Draw a picture or write a few words to describe one helpful and one unhelpful experience which you have had:

A helpful experience in a tutorial

An unhelpful experience in a tutorial

With these two tutorial experiences in mind, think about which roles and responsibilities your tutor seemed to be fulfilling at that time...

...as part of your helpful experience?

...as part of the unhelpful experience?

As a tutor you will be expected to fulfil a variety of responsibilities (tasks/activities/duties) in accordance with your role.

- While there are likely to be *some commonalities* across the University with regard to all tutors' responsibilities, other responsibilities will be *specific* - according to how your role is understood by your Department and Faculty and what it is that they expect of tutors.
- Your role and responsibilities *will also be determined by the needs and expectations* of your tutor co-ordinator, your students, the lecturer of the course for which you are tutoring, and the year co-ordinator.

Understandably, these multiple expectations and responsibilities can seem daunting. Let's begin to map out what may be required of you by considering the following question, **"Am I clear about my tutoring responsibilities?"**

Tick the responsibilities (below) which you know/think will apply to your tutor role:

- *Attend* tutor meetings
- *Prepare* for tutorials
- *Facilitate* tutorials
- *Assess* student work
- *Participate* in tutor development sessions
- *Complete* administrative tasks e.g. attendance registers, mark sheets
- *Communicate* with the departmental administrator, my students, year co-ordinator, lecturer and/or tutor co-ordinator

Can you think of any other tutoring responsibilities which do or may apply to you?

...Still not entirely clear?

If you are still not sure as to what is expected of you in your tutoring role, that's okay. How about engaging (online and/or in person) with your tutor co-ordinator, the relevant year co-ordinator, course lecturer, your departmental administrator and/or more experienced tutors, until you have clarity?

Requesting direction as you progress through the academic year is also important because some of your responsibilities may shift with a new course and lecturer, for instance. The needs of your students are likely to change as well.

What are *your* expectations? Inserting the "I" into tutoring...

While it is important to be clear about what others expect of you in your tutoring role, it is ***equally important to consider tutoring from your own perspective.***

Reflect on the thought-starters below and make a few notes for yourself -

“What can I expect of *my Department* in relation to my tutoring?”

“What expectations do I have of *my students*?”

“What might I expect of *my fellow tutors*?”

**“Do I have expectations of *anyone else* in relation to my tutoring?
If so, what are they?”**

“What do I expect of *myself as a tutor*?”*

**Note – We’ll explore your thoughts around these questions and others in more depth further on, in the section “How about developing a Tutoring Philosophy?” on page 12.*

Co-creating Enabling Spaces: How can tutors contribute towards the development of spaces which encourage their students’ learning?

Can you remember a time when you felt welcome in a tutorial space?

What was it about that context which helped you to feel at ease and open to learning?

Look through the **suggestions** in the table below.

Tick the option (LHS/RHS column) which you think best contributes to the development of welcoming tutorial spaces which foster engagement with learning.
Then **briefly justify** your choice in the space below:

Learn your students' preferred names - sometimes these are different to official names which appears on the attendance register.	There is no need to learn students' names - addressing students by name breeds familiarity.
Be strict and stern from the beginning so that students do not take advantage of you.	From the start, work with your group to create a set of expectations with which everyone is in agreement. What (for you and your group) is negotiable, what is not, and why?
Show interest in your students' academic development and their overall wellbeing.	Confine your interest in students to their academic work only.
Favour one student over another, according to how well they perform academically and how friendly they are to you.	Be consistent in the way you relate to all your students, regardless of their academic achievements and personal dispositions.

Arrive at the last minute for your tutorials.	Arrive in good time so that you can settle in, get organised, and be ready to greet your students as they arrive.
Prepare thoroughly for every tutorial and check with the course lecturer/tutor co-ordinator if you are unsure of anything.	Go with the 'flow' and make things up as you go along. After all, you were in 1st/2nd year not that long ago.
Be the first one out the door at the end of tutorials - you have a life!	Try to stay behind for a few minutes after tutorials to chat with your students and respond to any concerns/questions.
Students must wait until tutorials to ask questions of their tutor – you won't be available at any other times, via email for instance.	Respond timeously to emails from your students and consider starting a <i>facebook</i> page/similar online forum with your group. How you engage with students (during <i>and</i> in between tutorials) really matters to their learning.
Set out the tutorial room such that students are seated in rows. Seat yourself at the front of the room, preferably behind a desk. A tiered lecture theatre also works well to establish order and inculcate a disciplined work ethic.	Do your best to find a tutorial venue which is 'flat', rather than tiered. A space that has movable tables and chairs (which can be arranged into groups/circles to match the purpose of the activity/discussion at hand) is also helpful for small group learning. Sometimes you might wish to do work on the floor (in pairs, groups or a circle) in which case you can move chairs and tables to the side of the room.

Create opportunities for each student to contribute to written preparation, discussions and activities.	It's each student for themselves - they need to grow up and get on with things.
As tutor it is your right to decide how tutorials are conducted. Students don't have a say in these sorts of things.	While you will develop your own style of facilitation, it can be useful to find out from your students what is working well for their learning and what is not. In this way you can work to intersect with their needs.

How about developing a tutoring philosophy?

The questions and activities in which you have engaged throughout this chapter have been an attempt to assist you in *drafting the beginnings* of your tutoring philosophy.

Beginning tutors...

As you embark on the challenges of your tutoring role and related responsibilities, **refer to the notes you have made**, above. **Write** honestly and constructively about **your intentions and expectations for tutoring**, as well as any concerns and/or questions you may have.

- Can you **identify the fundamental values/principles** with which you intend working? Elements such as criticality, creativity and dialogue are some examples. Discuss these.
- Then **outline the rationale** of your tutoring philosophy. In so doing, you might find it useful to contemplate your responses to the following questions, “*When? Who? How? What? Where?*”, in relation to your rationale.

Experienced tutors...

Reflect on your previous experience of tutoring and **outline** what you have learned from these experiences. **Consider** which aspects of your practice you plan to **adapt**, as well as those which you wish to **consolidate**. Discuss your reasons and infuse detail with the addition of examples for each point which you make.

At a later point and indeed throughout your tutoring journey, you will have the opportunity to revisit this initial tutoring philosophy, informed by your tutoring experiences, thoughts and discussions over the academic year.

In pictures (your own or pics from magazines/newspapers/online spaces) and/or words, use this brainstorm box to map out your *ideas-impressions-questions-plans* for your draft tutoring philosophy.



Begin drafting the narrative of your tutoring philosophy here...



IDEA *How about sharing your initial tutoring philosophy with another tutor, one of your peers? You can offer to read through this person's philosophy in return. The process will offer you both an opportunity for reflection and discussion. You could even engage with one another again during the year, as your philosophies develop.*

Useful resource?

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/small_group_teaching_1.pdf



Facilitating Groups for Engaged Learning **Chapter 2**

CHAPTER 2

Facilitating Groups for Engaged Learning

In this chapter we consider some of the ways in which you can enable worthwhile group work engagements for and with your students. We also discuss how you can prepare to facilitate small groups effectively and creatively, such that your students are inspired to become inquiring learners who are actively involved in the learning process.

Group facilitation: Your experience of being a participant in a small group context

How have you experienced *various approaches to group work, from a participant's perspective?*

Circle the words which apply to your experience.

energising	boring	helpful
aggravating	inspiring	exhausting
time-wasting	informative	fun
inconvenient		fascinating
nerve-racking	worthwhile	frustrating

Can you think of any other words to describe your experience of group work?

Reflecting on the words you have circled (above) can you outline what has worked *well* for your learning, in terms of participating in group work? Why do you say so?

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What are/have been some of the *challenges*, for you, of learning in small groups?

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As a participant in groups where you have experienced challenges, how have you worked to *resolve* these? Share some *examples* from your experiences.

Group facilitation: the role of tutor as facilitator

What are some of the fundamental aspects of group facilitation? What might be your responsibilities when it comes to facilitating group work?

Let's consider some suggestions -

Negotiate and outline group boundaries.

For example, is it acceptable to the group that everybody talks at once, or do we take turns to speak? How are responsibilities shared within our group? Is it okay that people use their cell phones to text during our tutorial times? When we disagree with one another, do we disagree with someone's *point of view* and explain why, or do we 'take out' our disagreement on the *person* making the point?

Encourage participation and discussion.

This could be written, verbal, in person, or online.

Clarify and articulate group goals.

Define your group's objectives and tasks as clearly as possible. Emphasise the connection between goals and tasks to establish a sense of the group's overall intention.

Value learning as a continuing process.

Your thoughts and actions have the potential to inspire your students to recognise and value learning as an evolving process.

Enable each student the space to think and contribute.

Can you think of some of the ways in which you could create such space?

Affirm each of your student's contributions.

Everyone has something of value to contribute. These offerings may be diverse, as we will discuss further in Chapter 4.

Do you think it is important that tutors create space for each contribution to be recognised and worked with, in constructive ways? Why?

Can you think of any other responsibilities of tutors, in relation to group work?

Co-operative Learning Structures

Synonyms for "co-operative" =

obliging - helpful - accommodating - considerate - supportive - understanding

While learning takes place individually, our focus here is on the kinds of activities which make *learning together* possible. These co-operative learning structures are outlined below, along with a description of how each one works. We also consider the purpose or function of each structure.

Co-operative learning structure	Description of the learning structure	Academic and social function of each learning structure
Round Robin	Teambuilding - students take turns to share something with their teammates.	Expressing ideas and opinions. <i>Equal participation.</i> <i>Becoming acquainted with the group.</i>
Three-step Interview	Students interview one another in pairs - first one way, then the other. Students share with the broader group what they learned from each other during the interview.	Sharing personal information such as hypotheses, responses to a section of work. <i>Participation.</i> <i>Listening.</i>
Heads Together	Practice & Review - Almost like a quiz, the tutor asks a question, students consult to make sure everyone agrees on the response, then one student is called upon to respond on behalf of the group.	Review. Checking for comprehension. Building knowledge. <i>Tutoring.</i> <i>Collaborating.</i>
Pairs Check	Students work in pairs , in groups of four. Within pairs - students alternate - one solves a problem/issue while the other guides or 'coaches'. After every two solutions, the pairs share and compare responses, eliciting discussion and debate.	Practicing skills. <i>Learning together.</i> <i>Assisting one another.</i>
Think-Pair Share	Concept Development - Students first think to themselves about a particular topic/issue, then they pair up with another student to discuss it. The pair finally share their thoughts with the larger group/class.	Generating and revising, reasoning, application. <i>Participation.</i> <i>Involvement.</i>
Team Word-Webbing	Mind-mapping - Students work together on a piece of chart paper drawing main concepts, connecting elements, representing the relationships of their ideas about a particular concept.	Analysis of concepts, understanding multiple relationships of ideas, differentiating concepts. <i>Visual learning.</i> <i>Conceptual understanding.</i> <i>Role-taking.</i>

Co-operative learning structure	Description of the learning structure	Academic and social function of each learning structure
Roundtable	Information Exchange - within teams, each student in turn writes one answer to a question as paper and pencil are passed around the group. Students may work from a set of written questions (set by the tutor/lecturer/group themselves) or these may be called out by the tutor. With Simultaneous Roundtable, more than one paper is circulated at once. Participants' responses are discussed at the end.	Assessing prior knowledge, practicing skills, recalling information. <i>Team-building.</i> <i>Participation of everyone.</i>
Writing Board Share	Knowledge Exchange - between teams. There is usually pre-determined space (for example a shared board, or a board each) for each team to write an opinion, solve a problem or share other information. Discussion of these responses follows.	Sharing information, contrasting divergent opinions or engaging with problem-solving strategies. <i>Group-building.</i> <i>Participation.</i>

Adapted from Kagan, M. and Kagan, S. 2009. Cooperative Learning. San Clemente, California.

Now that you are familiar with the various aspects of the table, above, consider your responses to the following questions:

Have you ever participated in any of these co-operative learning structures? If so, note them here...

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If you responded “yes” to the previous question, which learning structures in particular appealed to you, and which one/s did not work as well? Explain why.

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Asking questions can prove valuable for learning because it encourages students to engage fully

with the topic under discussion. There is something of an ‘art’ to asking questions, however, so consider a few ideas.

Ask questions - avoid statements.

For example: *“Why is the sky blue?”*

Rather than: *“The sky is blue because air distributes less red sunlight than blue sunlight.”*

Ask one question at a time - rather than several, lengthy questions at once.

For example: *“What are the five leading causes of heart disease in women?”*

Instead of: *“What are the five leading causes of heart disease in women in addition to the most prominent symptoms of heart disease and drug-related as well as homeopathic treatment options, along with heart disease mortality rates in South Africa amongst women ages 50-70 years of age from 2007 - 2017?”*

Ask open questions - rather than closed questions.

For example: *“Why was Hitler successful in his plan to foster a culture of anti-Semitism?”*

[This open question enables a variety of responses, not so?]

“Was Hitler successful in his plan to promote a culture of anti-Semitism?”

[This closed question only allows for a “yes” or “no” response, which means that students lose the opportunity to explore the issue and argue for/against it.]

Design an open question of your choice:

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Now change this open question into a closed question:

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Select impartial or unbiased questions rather than ‘leading’/biased questions which presume the answer.

For example: *“Why is Hendrik Verwoerd’s title of the ‘architect of apartheid’ warranted?”*

Is this an impartial question or a leading question? Why do you think so?

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Another example: *“Hendrik Verwoerd has been referred to as the ‘architect of apartheid’. Do you consider this view to be fitting or not, and what is your rationale?”*

Is this question impartial or ‘leading’ in nature? Explain your reasoning.

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Scaffolding the inquiry process - some ideas

- Give your students adequate time to think about and/or write down their responses to questions, rather than asking a series of questions one after the other. This thinking-writing can be done individually and/or in pairs.
- Share questions with your students the week before or online, so that students have the opportunity to arrive at their next tutorial having done their individual preparatory work for the group discussion.
- Task your students with developing a set of questions around a particular issue or subject, themselves. The process of designing appropriate questions is often of more educational value than simply answering them.

Can you think of any more suggestions for supporting the inquiry process? *What works well* for you when *you* are faced with questions, for instance?

Avoid “right”/“wrong” or “good”/“bad” responses.

These words used in response to answers can make responding to questions very stressful for students, particularly when spoken by tutors in the presence of peers or when written on an assignment, as we will discuss further in Chapter 3. Rather, reflect on the response your student has offered by sharing your understanding and adjusting the information if necessary. You can also ask other students if they would like to build on what has been said, or make alternative contributions.

Listen (*really listen*) as your students speak with you and/or with each other, rather than feeling pressure to talk most of the time. Some of us struggle to endure silence. As a tutor, learning to ‘tolerate’ or (better yet) become comfortable with silence, can be helpful and rewarding. *Why?* It is from these silences that ideas, comments and questions often arise. Even if silence means that your students simply acknowledge that they are not sure of the answer and need to think or investigate further, that quiet time of reflection has served a valuable purpose.

Perhaps you disagree? If so, share your perspective on silence in relation to learning and teaching spaces.

Encourage your students to elaborate on their responses - rather than noting a response and quickly moving on to another question. You might say, for example: *“Can you say a little more about that?”* or *“Thank you. Could you explain why you’re proposing that the honey bee is more critical to the planet than the snake?”*

Invite (and continue to re-invite) your students to ask questions of themselves, of one another, questions of you as tutor, of texts, questions of lecturers, librarians, demonstrators, questions online,

questions of whomever or whatever - and frequently - because *questions spark learning!*

Release yourself from *having* to know the answer to each and every question.

While this is not to excuse tutors from thorough preparation, if you find yourself in such a situation, acknowledge that you are not sure and ask other students in the group if they might suggest an answer. If no suggestions are forthcoming, then arrange with the student/s to do some research and feedback to the group online, or during the next tutorial session. Pretending that you know the answer (and ‘muddling’ through it) when you have no idea, will inevitably show. This misinformation will misdirect your students’ learning while serving to undermine students’ trust in you.

Finally, question-response interactions may be facilitated in the spirit of collaborative exploration or they may take place under stringent, punitive conditions.

Which one of these approaches do you favour in terms of facilitating the learning process?

Why do you favour this approach?

“Using structured reading groups to facilitate deep learning”

You may have heard someone saying, “*I’m reading towards my (BA/BSc/LLB/BCom/B/Ed BPharm... etc.) degree*” although this is in less common use nowadays. Students tend to say “*I’m doing a degree*”. Regardless of the wording, you will be aware that *most degrees involve significant reading*, both in terms of volume *and* complexity. In addition, students are not always hugely motivated to read extensively.

Heather Macpherson Parrott and Elizabeth Cherry’s (2011) article entitled “Using structured reading groups to facilitate deep learning” outlines a practical group work format which the authors used in their courses, with the **aim of encouraging deep reading** and **dynamic discussion**. *You may find some of these ideas useful for your tutorial group, as well as your own studies.*

Take a look at the *abstract* below, which offers an *outline of what to expect in this article*:

“Two significant challenges in teaching college courses are getting students to complete the readings and, beyond that, having them engage in deep reading. We have developed a specific group work format within our courses to facilitate both deep reading and active discussion of course material. Early in the semester, students are assigned to their small groups and a *set of rotating group roles: discussion leader, passage master, devil’s advocate, creative connector, and reporter*. Students meet with their group regularly in class throughout the semester. Before each group meeting, they are to complete a set of readings and a reading preparation sheet for their given reading group role. In this article, we outline how to implement these groups, the benefits of them, and variations to the standard format. We also present quantitative and qualitative student evaluations of this group work format demonstrating the success of this teaching technique.”

Communication

Knowing ourselves: How can tutors practice supportive communication rather than defensive communication as a means of engaging with their students?

See if you can identify your *six most dominant communication patterns* in the table, below. Tick or highlight those which you think most apply to you.

Defensive Communication Patterns	Supportive Communication Patterns
Evaluating - judgemental, accusatory, emotive, telling it like we want it to be.	Descriptive - relating/reflecting things as they are. We view problem as separate to person.
Controlling - attempts to enforce goals, impose ideas and values, demands that others fall in 'line'.	Openness - lack of hidden motives, enables others to understand mutual issues/problems, encourages mutually- sought solutions.
Strategising - calculating, manipulative, deceptive, conceals motives.	Spontaneity - open, honest, forthright. We 'own' our thoughts and feelings.
Neutrality - aloof, cold, clinical, analytic. Neutral communication may be harmful to others' sense of self-worth.	Empathy - we value the ideas of others, see others as individual <i>people</i> rather than generic units/objects.
Superiority - focuses on difference, emphasises the 'weaknesses' of others, lost opportunities for connection and dialogue.	Equality - views 'difference' as a unique resource, seeks strengths, evokes mutual respect and inspires contribution.
Certainty - has all the 'answers', intent on proving a point, low tolerance for new ideas.	Provisionalism - willingness to genuinely hear and consider, searches for information, creative and unthreatened.

Table adapted from Gibb, J.R., 1961. Defensive communication. *Journal of communication*, 11(3), pp.141-148.

Consider these points.

Which patterns of communication (of those which you highlighted in the table, above) do you think will assist you in your tutoring work?

Share some examples of how you imagine these patterns of communication may 'play out' positively in your tutorial space.

Which patterns of communication did you identify as *holding you back from engaging fully* with your students?

How do you think that these patterns, in turn, hinder/may hinder your students' ability to learn?

How do you think you could begin to shift these limiting communication patterns, with a view to enhancing your students' capacity to learn and develop?

Let's consider some group facilitation-related scenarios.

Scenario 1 - There is a good rapport within your tutorial group. There are never any unproductive silences and there is fruitful discussion in which most students participate. You find that there are occasional moments, however, in which you realise/think that you are completely off topic i.e. on a 'tangent'.

Is this something to be concerned about, or not? Why?
If 'tangents' are of concern, what might you do to address this?

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Scenario 2 - In any tutorial group there will inevitably be people of varying dispositions, for example:

- Extroverted students who speak often and with ease
- Introverted students who are engaged, but who seldom verbalise their thoughts.
- Seemingly bored, disinterested students who stare out of the window/at their phones.

How would you work with each of these students?

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Scenario 3 - Your students are working together on a group project, and one of the groups complains to you that someone in their group is not contributing anything at all.

How might you respond? Feel free to suggest more than one option.

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Scenario 4 - One of the students in your group is an old family acquaintance. This person regularly calls you aside for 'inside' information about the course and assessments and becomes overly-familiar when speaking to you in the presence of the tutorial group.

Would this situation be a concern for you, or not?

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What are your reasons?

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If this situation is of concern, what approach would you take in attempting to resolve it?

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Scenario 5 - You are at *The Rat* with friends on Wednesday evening when one of your students approaches you and offers to buy you a drink, which you gladly accept. You make small talk with the student for a while and then later as you are about to leave, the student approaches in a rather overly-friendly way and asks if you would like to go out for supper sometime.

How would you respond to this invitation?

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In retrospect, would you change the way in which you responded earlier when the drink was offered, and why?

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What are your thoughts on tutors engaging in romantic relationships with their students?

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Scenario 6 - There is a variety of students in your tutorial group:

- Group 'entertainers' who help with comic relief but disturb group concentration.
- Students who answer most questions (usually accurately) and interrupt other students as they try to respond.
- Less confident students who, while often capable, constantly ask questions on seemingly self-explanatory issues and frequently look for reassurance.

How could you attempt to work with these students' varying dispositions, assuming that you intend to establish enabling learning spaces for *all* students in your group?

In conclusion...

As you reflect on this chapter *Facilitating Groups for Engaged Learning*, think about which *key points or learnings* stand out for you and the *reasons* for their significance.

Consider our various deliberations.

Group facilitation: your experience of being a participant in a small group context (page 17)

The key learnings which stood out for me in this section are...

These learnings are significant for me because...

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Group facilitation: the role of tutor as facilitator (pages 17-18)

Key points which stood out for me are...

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I think that these are significant because...

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**Co-operative learning structures and their academic and social functions
(pages 18-21)**

Key points which stood out for me in this section are...

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These strike me as significant because...

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**Sparkling learning: working with questions to encourage engaged learning
(pages 21-24)**

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“Using structured reading groups to facilitate deep learning” (pages 24-25)

Parrott, H.M. and Cherry, E., 2011.

Key learnings which stood out for me are...

These are significant because...

Communication: supportive and defensive communication patterns (pages 25-26)

Key points which stood out for me in this section are...

These strike me as significant because...

Group Scenarios (pages 26-29)

Key learnings which stood out for me are...

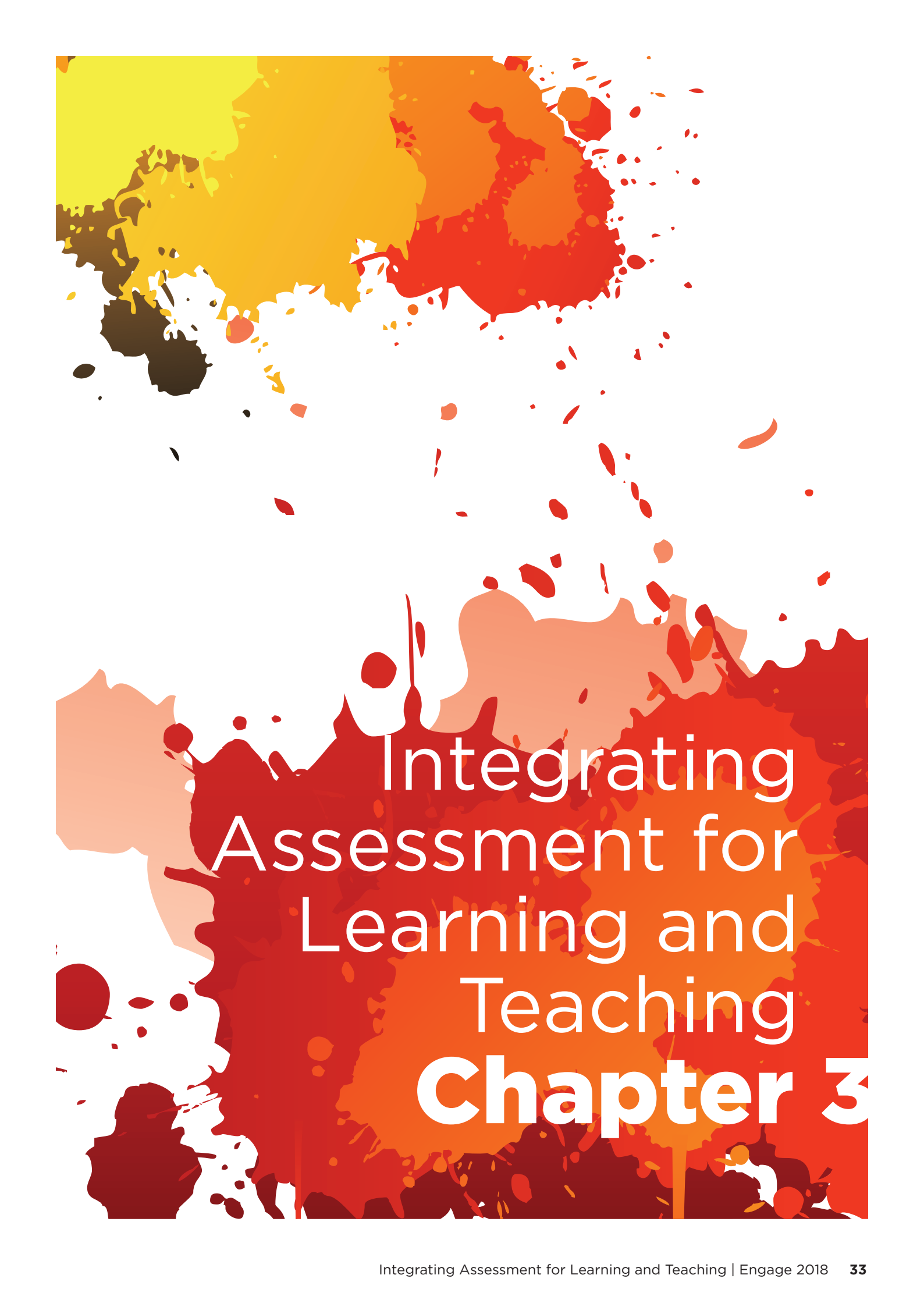
These are significant because...

In closing, how would you encapsulate your sense/ understanding of group work now that you have worked through this chapter?

Capture the essence of your current understanding of group work by choosing images from online spaces, magazines, newspapers, wherever. Use these images to create a collage in the space provided.



Draft a synopsis of what your collage represents.



Integrating Assessment for Learning and Teaching **Chapter 3**

CHAPTER 3

Integrating Assessment for Learning and Teaching: What is your understanding of assessment?

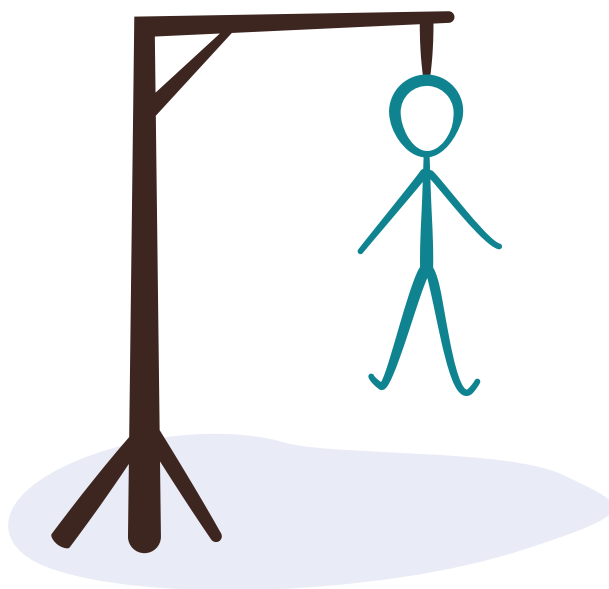
In 90 seconds - without thinking too much - *sketch* your understanding of assessment.

Now briefly *describe* this same understanding of assessment in *words*.

I understand assessment to be...

Understandings of Assessment

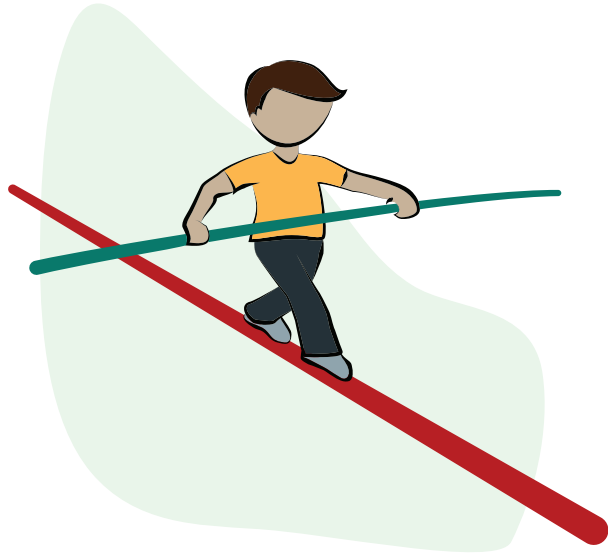
Look at some of the ways in which previous tutors have visually represented their conceptions of assessment.



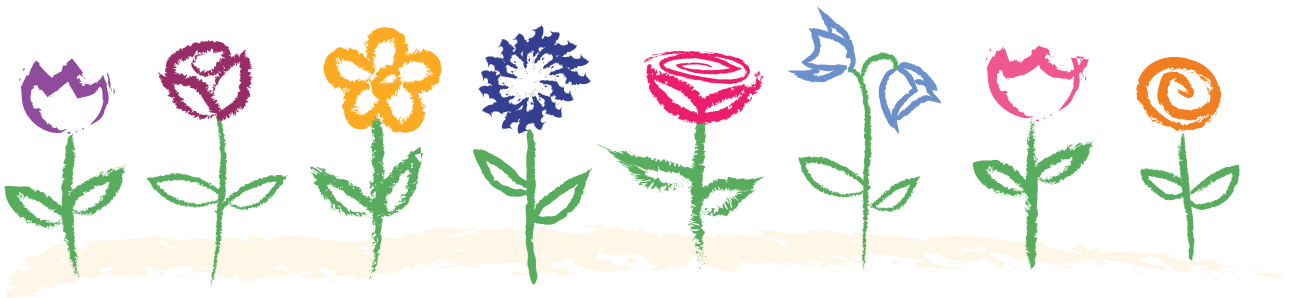
In relation to the sketch above, how do you think this tutor understands assessment?



What does this spiral image convey to you, about this tutor's possible conception of assessment?



What do you think that assessment might mean to the tutor who sketched this image?



How do you think this tutor understands assessment?

What is assessment?

As illustrated above, assessment has a variety of meanings for different people. Maddox (2000: 143) explains that the word “assessment” is derived “from the Latin term *assidere* which means, ‘to sit beside’. Sitting beside implies that the act of assessment involves coaching or guidance.”

What connotations does the notion of *sitting beside* hold for you?

If you were to *sit beside* a student in an assessment capacity, for instance, how would you *be* and what might you *do*?

Why? What are some of the ‘bigger picture’ reasons for assessment?

Assessment is a process which supports the development of student learning by assisting students in developing their practice, thereby increasing their understanding and learning.

Assessment helps us to:

- **share** feedback with students on their learning
- **distinguish** between students’ performance
- **evaluate** individual student performance
- **accredit** students.

Belluigi, D. 2009. Effective Assessment Practice: Presentation.

How? Principles of sound assessment practice

1. Assessment should be valid

Assessment tasks should assess what the assessor *really* wants to measure. When focussing on what it is that students are meant to have learned, assessment ideally allows students to demonstrate to what extent they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. When attempting to assess problem-solving skills, for example, assessment would focus on the processes and quality of ‘solutions’ which students develop, rather than the quality and style of written work.

2. Assessment should be reliable

If assessors can work towards designing clear and effective task briefings, assessment criteria and assessment criteria rubrics, these create the potential for inter-tutor reliability (when more than one tutor assesses work) as well as effective intra-lecturer reliability. In other words, assessors should ideally award the *same* results when assessing the *same* work on *different* occasions.

3. Assessment should be transparent

There should be no hidden agendas and no unexpected ‘surprises’ for students. Assessment should be in alignment with the intended learning outcomes for the course of learning as published in student course handbooks, RUconnected sites and curriculum documentation. The links between these intended learning outcomes and the assessment criteria used should be plain for everyone to see, including our students.

4. Assessment should be fair

Students should have an equivalence of *opportunities* to succeed in any given assessment task, even if students’ experiences are not identical. This is particularly important when assessing work based on individual learning. It is also important that all assessment instruments and processes should be seen to be fair by all students. Assessment should be challenging for all, without being unfair and completely beyond the reach of many.

Naturally students may prefer certain forms of assessment and achieve better results in some tasks than in others. Some students enjoy exams and excel in them, for example, while other students have an affinity for delivering oral presentations or writing essays. A balanced, varied selection of assessment forms within a course of study will aim to ensure that no particular group of students is favoured over any other group.

5. Assessment should be formative, even when it is intended to be summative.

Assessment is a time-consuming process for everyone involved, so it seems like a wasted opportunity if assessors do not engage with it as a means of dialoguing with their students and sharing feedback. Feedback lets our students know how they are progressing and how they can improve their work. Assessment that is primarily summative in its function, for example when a percentage or symbol alone is given, offers students very little information with which to improve their learning.

6. Assessment should be timely

Assessment which takes place only at the end of a learning programme or course offers little value in terms of sharing feedback and, in turn, development. Untimely assessment also leads to 'sudden death syndrome', where students have no chance to practise before they either pass or fail. Even in instances where only formal, end-point assessment exists, earlier opportunities should be created for students to 'rehearse' the final assessment.

7. Assessment should be developmental

Ideally, assessment-related dialogue between tutors and/or lecturers and their students should take place incrementally to enable the development of learning. This approach avoids unfortunate surprises for students. It is also considerably less stressful than assessment where a whole learning programme rests on students' performance during a single time-constrained assessment event, such as a test or examination.

8. Assessment should be redeemable

Most institutions of higher learning insist that assessment systems make provision for opportunities which permit the *redemption* of failure, such as supplementary examinations, should students not meet assessment criteria. The notion of redeemability also extends to assignments where students have the opportunity to respond to formative feedback and re-submit their work.

9. Assessment should be accessible to all, to some degree.

Assessment systems should permit all students who are considered capable of undertaking a course of study to have a chance of succeeding, provided they work to the best of their ability. Assessment should be designed for all students to be able to demonstrate learning at a range of levels. Pitching assessment tasks at a 'basic' level which all students should be able to manage, works well for example, before gradually building up to assessments which are more challenging. Furthermore, building up to more challenging work in summative assessments, as appropriate, allows all students to demonstrate that of which they are capable.

10. Assessment should be manageable, yet effective

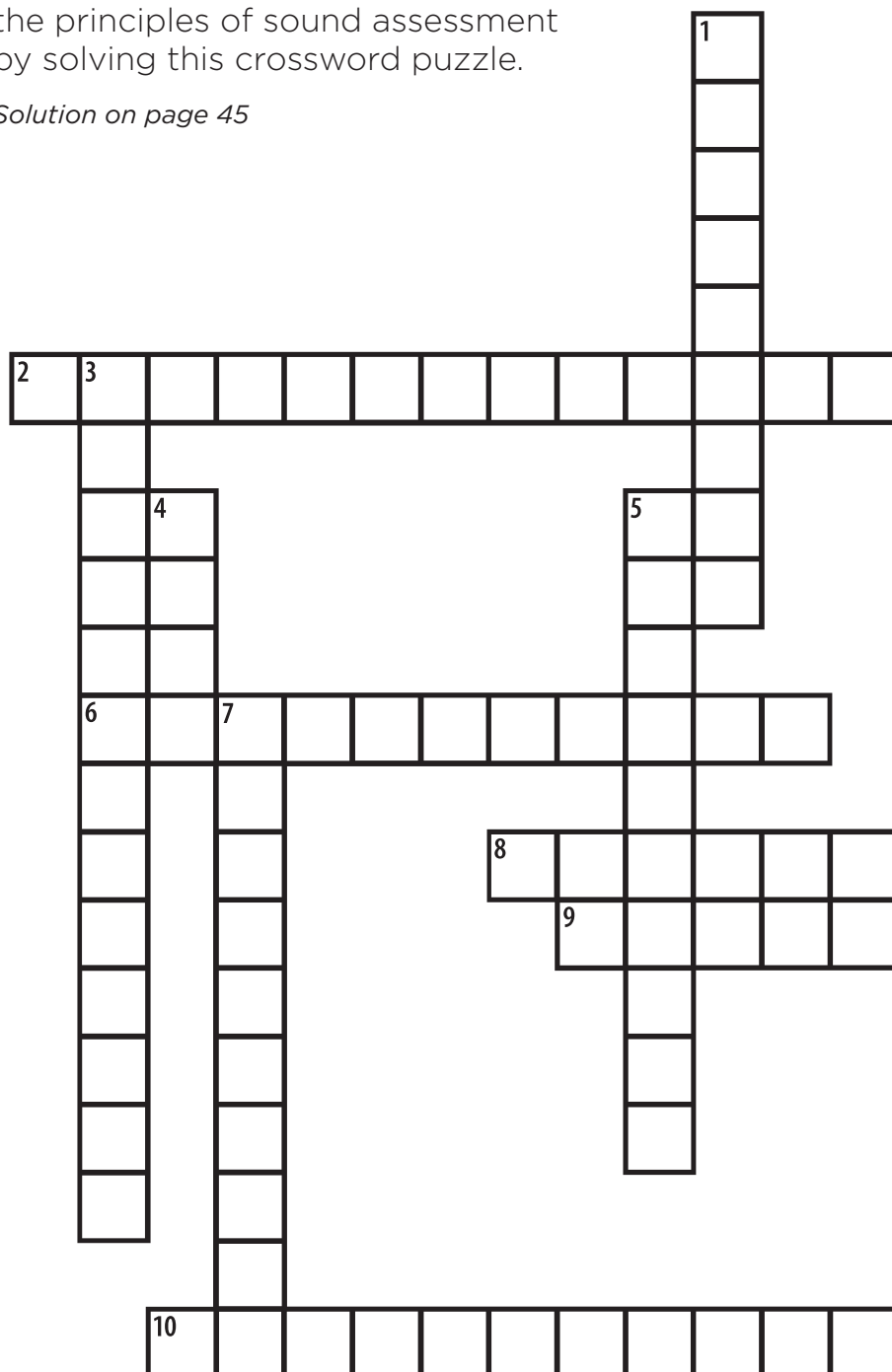
Assessment is made feasible through the effective use of staff time and resources. Staff may include tutors, teaching assistants, administrators, demonstrators and lecturers. It is critical to note that despite pragmatic concerns, however, assessment should remain *effective* or in other words, fit for purpose. Assessments too often lose their validity in the quest for efficiency. The effectiveness of assessment should not be subjugated to efficiency.

Principles of sound assessment practice adapted from Race, 2001.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Consolidate your understanding of the principles of sound assessment by solving this crossword puzzle.

Solution on page 45



ACROSS

2. The provision of regular, modest assessments which incrementally build to a final mark or grade reflects assessment practice which is (13).

6. Intended outcomes and criteria for assessment are communicated and known to students. Information about assessment, therefore, is (11).

8. Assessments which take place in a (6) fashion provide occasion for students to engage with feedback from their tutor and/or lecturer so as to work to consolidate and develop their learning.

9. Enabling students to offer evidence of to what extent they have accomplished the intended learning outcomes makes assessment (5).

10. The assessment of all assignments in a 'batch', to the same standard, indicates the of that assessment practice (11).

DOWN

1. Posing questions in response to work helps students to develop their work and is an example of (9) assessment practice.

3. Pragmatic concerns should not undermine the of assessment practice (13).

4. In order to be considered (4) assessment practice should not discriminate between students, nor should it disadvantage any individual or group.

5. Provision for assessment which is (10) is considered fair practice and enables students the opportunity to try again, should assessment criteria not be met.

7. Systems of assessment which allow all students who are deemed capable of a course of study, the opportunity to succeed, are considered to be (10).

Activity: Sound assessment practice continued.

Choose at least five of the above principles of sound assessment practice (or elements of these principles) with which you agree and/or disagree. *Share* your reasons for these choices.

I feel strongly that assessment should be...because...

I believe that assessment should not be...My reasons for this are...

Would you find these online resources valuable for your assessment practice?

Rhodes University Case Studies

Assessment in higher education: Reframing traditional understandings and practices

https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/chertl/documents/RU%20_%20Assessment%20in%20HE.pdf

Rhodes University Policy on the Assessment of Student Learning

<https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/Assessment%20of%20Student%20Learning%20Policy.pdf>

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa

<http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/pol/2015/National%20Policy%20for%20Assessment.pdf>

How might you respond to your students' work?

As a tutor, you will likely have numerous opportunities to engage with and respond to your students' work. Your responsibilities may vary from the assessment of reports, projects, short-question responses, tests, oral and/or visual presentations, essays, experiments, portfolios, critical journals, and others. Whichever form of assessment you encounter through your engagement with this chapter, you will have a starting point from which to consider your approach to assessment, in collaboration with your department's approach to assessment.

As an example, let us consider an extract of a **first year Psychology student's essay**, below, in relation to the way in which *two different tutors* respond.

Read through this text and the tutor's (Thandeka's) comments, inserted in the margin on the right:

Note – Comments A1, N6 etc. should ideally reflect the tutor's name, in this case "Thandeka". Owing to the technical challenges of converting Word with trackchanges to pdf, however, in this case the tutor's name presents as varying codes. Please disregard this for your own practice.

Development of a human being takes place over a lifetime, and is **essential** for living a functional and social life. Development falls into different categories, namely cognitive, biological, social and emotional. All forms of development are easily **stunted** and manipulated. As a discipline, developmental psychology aims to explain the changes in people over time. Children are often the main **focus** because of their sensitivity to their environments, and because of the deeply ingrained characteristics that children acquire which remain with them for the duration of their lifetime. What can be considered 'normal' development is debated by theorists. Similarly, what is considered atypical development is debated and researched. Within the **discipline**, theorists **look at** the different stages of development and their respective characteristics. **This essay will outline** two developmental theories created by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky and it will continue to discuss the cognitive aspects of both theories and what they examine what they consider to be 'normal' development - finally the essay will attempt to critically analyse the concept of 'atypical' development.

Commented [A1]: Perhaps explain why it is essential – or do you do this later on? If the latter is your plan, I suggest that you signal to your reader at this point that you intend to discuss these reasons later on.

Commented [A2]: Interesting point. How would you support this claim? Why do you argue that development is "easily stunted and manipulated"?

Commented [A3]: Could you be more explicit here? "Children are the main focus of.....because of their sensitivity...."

Commented [N4]: Be specific. This may appear obvious to us, but let's assume that your reader does not know the discipline to which you are referring. So – "Within the discipline of developmental psychology..."

Commented [A5]: Given that you are writing a formal academic essay, you might use a less colloquial alternative to "look at". How else could you phrase this?

Commented [N6]: Great, very important - you are 'signposting' for your reader here – being clear as to what will follow in your essay.

Commented [N7]: This final sentence of the paragraph contains important information as to your essay's trajectory – only everything in one sentence makes your points less clear. How about breaking this up into two sentences?

Commented [N8]: It would be useful to offer a brief explanation of "cognisance" at this point, given that it is a new concept you're introducing.

Commented [N9]: The first stage of...? It may be implied that you are referring to the first stage of physical development, but let's not take it for granted that the reader knows that you know – rather be explicit.

Commented [A10]: I wonder if "vice versa" might be a more academic way of expressing "the other way around".

Commented [N11]: Do you see the repetition here? Delete as necessary and streamline.

Commented [N12]: Check spelling

Commented [N13]: I would avoid abbreviations such as etc. e.g. and i.e. in a piece of academic writing.

Human beings develop physically before they develop **cognisance**. Physical development begins at conception and ends with death. It is a lifelong process and is characterised by the visible and invisible changes that the corporeal human body experiences. The first **stage** is infancy, which is characterised by rapid growth and change in the body. The senses and reflexes are some of the first physical developments, followed by learning to control movement. The next stage is early and middle childhood which involves steady growth and change, leading up to puberty. Adolescence is the next stage, characterised by puberty and the development of primary and secondary sex characteristics. Adulthood is the final maturation stage post-adolescence and leads up to eventual death of the physical body.

Physical and cognitive development are incredibly closely intertwined. Mental health affects physical health, and **the** other way around. **In** this sense, it is difficult to separate mental and physical health) It is in this sense that it is difficult to separate them. This essay will focus mainly on cognitive development.

Cognitive development is the concept referring to the development of one's brain; thought **proceses**, understanding, ability to solve problems, remembering, communication skills **etc**. For the purposes of this essay, Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development will be explained as an example of an opinion on what 'normal' development' is.

(continued overleaf)

Piaget views cognitive development as being investigative of how children's thinking changes as the child grows (Comer et al, 2013). He began his theorising by viewing children in naturalistic situations, and then bringing what he had observed into his theory. He observed children in the same situations that he had in the previous ones, but altered them slightly and took note of the reactions and changes in behaviour.

He developed the idea that every functional person has a mental framework that is the base or structure for how the subject views the world (Comer et al, 2013). Piaget (1952) described it as "a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning". He named these frameworks schemata. According to McLeod (2015), when Piaget spoke of a person's mental processes developing, he was referring to the growth and increased complexity of their schemata. It was his belief that a person's essential schematic development and growth took place through learning and social experience, which shape every person's world view. Current, existing schemata's are what offer the opportunity to understand and perceive (McLeod, 2015).

In order for schemata to grow and develop, Piaget theorised that "assimilation" could occur. This assimilation refers to when new information is combined with the already existing information (Comer, 2013). This additional information is an adaptation of the already understood information and so it is fairly easy to process for most children. However, some information is drastically different from the already existing understanding that a child may have. It is in these cases that Piaget theorises that "accommodation" is necessary. This means that in order to incorporate the new information into one's general world view, there needs to be a drastic altering of existing schemata. (Comer, 2013)

If a child is able to assimilate and accommodate, Piaget would view them as developing 'normally'. It is his view that if the child is able to do both, they will achieve an equilibrium in terms of the balance of their mental framework, which is 'normal' and ideal. (Comer, 2013)

Piaget's developmental theory is known as a stage theory which refers to the different stages of life that each individual lives through. It is in this sense that his theory is slightly restrictive in its understanding of normal development. His theory is specific in its time frames and implies that if a person has not successfully exited a stage by the age that he has stipulated, that they are abnormal. This is not always the case, because different countries and cultures provide different developmental environments for their children and future adults, so (therefore) theories cannot claim absolutism.

The stage theory refers to four different stages, the first being the sensorimotor stage. This stage is specific to infants from birth to two years old. The objective of this age is to achieve object permanence. Piaget explains that in this stage, the infant has no understanding beyond immediate experiences, and that motor skills

Commented [A14]: The very first time you quote a group of authors, write out all their surnames in full. Thereafter, you can go ahead and use "et al" as you have done.

Commented [N15]: Be clear about who "He" is here. If you are speaking about Piaget then: "Piaget (in Comer et al, 2013) began his theorising by..."

Commented [A16]: Giving an example of what you mean by "naturalistic" would be useful here.

Commented [A17]: I suggest that you repeat the name Piaget, rather than "he". Even though this can be tiresome, it is helpful for your reader when you are clear.

Commented [N18]: When words are quoted directly, include a page number as part of your reference. For example: Piaget (1952: 56) described...

Commented [A19]: Are you making use of plural or singular? Choose one and keep to it, for consistency and grammar.

Commented [N20]: State clearly whose belief you are referring to here.

Commented [N21]: Check the spelling here. Consider adding a "spellcheck" function to your PC – it will alert you so that you can easily spot these kinds of 'glitches'.

Commented [SS22R21]: Delete space!

Commented [A23]: Maybe try not to start sentences with "However". Rather embed "however" further on in your sentence – "Some information, however, is drastically different from..."

Commented [N24]: Include the year and page number here, so that your reference is complete.

Commented [A25]: Does the full stop come before or after the reference?

Commented [N26]: Double check your spelling here.

Commented [A27]: Might "its" need an apostrophe?

Commented [N28]: I'm not sure about the use of brackets in this instance.

Commented [A29]: Could you explain what you mean by "absolutism"?

Commented [A30]: For official terms/names I would use double quotation marks rather than single quotation marks.

Commented [N31]: Add in the year of publication in brackets, after "Piaget".

This is Thandeka's overall note to the above student, Siphokazi, below:

22/03/18

Siphokazi,

Your essay is progressing well. It's clear from your response to the essay question that you are making sense of this section of the course. Well done.

Your work makes claims and substantiates these with evidence, which is how we build academic arguments. You've made careful use of paragraphs to structure your argument and your 'signposting' for the reader is clear.

In addition to my comments in-text, please look through the assessment criteria rubric which

I've attached here for you. This rubric will give you an idea of what your essay has achieved so far and what you might want to aim towards.

Once you have had a chance to read through your piece again in relation to my feedback, I look forward to your replies in the comment boxes as well as your revisions and additions to the essay itself.

You're welcome to mail me with any comments and/or questions in the meantime.

All the best,

Thandeka

Reflect on Thandeka’s approach to assessment.

What about Thandeka’s way of responding to Siphokazi’s essay, if anything, do you find *valuable*? Explain your reasons and note examples (from Thandeka’s comments and overall approach) to illustrate your points.

Valuable elements of Thandeka’s way of responding to this essay were...

.....

.....

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.....

.....

My reasons, with some examples, are....

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.....

Which aspects of Thandeka’s feedback, if any, do you consider *unhelpful*? Why? Share examples from Thandeka’s feedback to support your responses.

I would argue that the following aspects of Thandeka's feedback to Siphokazi were unhelpful...

The reasons (with examples) as to why I consider this feedback unhelpful are...

Which principles of sound assessment, if any, do you notice in Thandeka's assessment practice? Note a few examples.

I noticed that Thandeka's practice included the following principles of sound assessment practice...

Examples of sound assessment practice from Thandeka's comments and overall approach to Siphokazi's essay are...

How do you think Thandeka's approach to assessment could be *improved*, if at all?

Thandeka's approach to assessment could be improved in the following ways...

NOTE – It is not possible to offer this high level of feedback every time when working with large groups of students. Close attention to high level feedback is one of the advantages of the tutorial space, however, one of which we should take advantage.

Now read through another tutor's (Siya's) handwritten feedback on the same first year essay extract (*continued overleaf*).

Consider Siya's approach to responding to Siphokazi's essay.

What about Siya's response to the essay, if anything, do you consider valuable?

I think that the following aspects of Siya's approach are valuable for Siphokazi's learning...

Why do you say so? Select some examples from Siya's overall approach and/or comments to support your points.

I thought Siya's approach was valuable because...

Solution to crossword on page 39. ACROSS: 2. developmental ; 6. transparent; 8. timely; 9. valid; 10. reliability. DOWN: 1. formative; 3. effectiveness; 4. fair; 5. redeemable; 7. accessible.

Where is your cover page? name? student no?

why?

The development of a human being takes place over a lifetime, and is essential for living a functional and social life. Development falls into different categories, namely cognitive, biological, social and emotional. All forms of development are easily stunted and manipulated. As a discipline, developmental psychology aims to explain the changes in people over time. Children are often the main focus because of their sensitivity to their environments, and because of the deeply ingrained characteristics that children acquire which remain with them for the duration of their lifetime. What can be considered 'normal' development is debated by theorists. Similarly, what is considered atypical development is debated and researched. Within the discipline, theorists look at the different stages of development and their respective characteristics. This essay will outline two developmental theories created by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky and it will continue to discuss the cognitive aspects of both theories and what they examine what they consider to be 'normal' development - finally the essay will attempt to critically analyse the concept of 'atypical' development.

more?

e.g.?

examine

nice... but very long sentence

??

Human beings develop physically before they develop cognisance. Physical development begins at conception and ends with death. It is a lifelong process and is characterised by the visible and invisible changes that the corporeal human body experiences. The first stage is infancy, which is characterised by rapid growth and change in the body. ~~The senses and reflexes are some of the first physical developments, followed by learning to control movement. The next stage is early and middle childhood which involves steady growth and change, leading up to puberty.~~ Adolescence is the next stage, characterised by puberty and the development of primary and secondary sex characteristics. Adulthood is the final maturation stage post-adolescence and leads up to eventual death of the physical body.

not relevant.

Explain

Physical and cognitive development are incredibly closely intertwined. Mental health affects physical health, and the other way around. (In this sense, it is difficult to separate mental and physical health) It is in this sense that it is difficult to separate them. This essay will focus mainly on cognitive development.

X

why repetition?

Sp!!

Cognitive development is the concept referring to the development of one's brain; thought processes, understanding, ability to solve problems, remembering, communication skills etc. For the purposes of this essay, Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development will be explained as an example of an opinion on what 'normal' development is.

that they are abnormal. This is not always the case, because different countries and cultures provide different developmental environments for their children and future adults, so ^{brackets?} (therefore) theories cannot claim absolutism.

The stage theory refers to four different stages, the first being the sensorimotor stage. This stage is specific to infants from birth to two years old. The objective of this age is to achieve object permanence. ^{EXPLAIN} ^(reference) Piaget explains that in this stage, the infant has no understanding beyond immediate experiences, and that motor skills and senses are used to ^(year) motivate thought processes. In achieving object permanence, which according to Piaget would mean that the child had thus far developed normally, the child becomes able to understand that objects and people exist even when they aren't visible to the child. This involves the child's ability to develop a mental representation, essentially a schemata of the object, and retain knowledge of it (McLeod, 2015). ^{more detail needed.}

The second stage is named the 'preoperational' stage. It is in this stage (between the ages of two and seven years old) that children develop their imagination. This means that they are able to view objects symbolically, and have ideas about them that are different than what the object was originally presented to them as (Comer, 2013). In this stage, thinking is still "egocentric" (McLeod, 2015); the child is unable to understand or take into account other people's views. ^{Substantiate!} This second stage is an essential aspect of developing a child's cognitive ability, according to Piaget. The third stage of development as seen in Piaget's stage theory is called the 'concrete operational' stage. The age range for this stage is 'normally' seven to 11 years old. He viewed this stage as being significant because it is the beginning of the child's logical and operational thought processes (McLeod, 2015) ^{Placing...?} which is an aspect of life which continues until death. The child begins to be able to understand more complex relationships between objects and people, for example....."if I take a biscuit from the cookie jar without permission my mother will be angry with me" or "if I get good marks at school I can earn extra pocket money". This involves understanding the concept of cause and effect, which is part of 'normal' development (Comer, 2013). The fourth and final stage is from age 11 and lasts into developed adulthood. This is called the 'formal operational' stage and refers to the ability to fully understand and practice abstract and hypothetical thinking. According to Piaget's theory, if a person has developed 'normally'... ^{Conclusion?}

^{nice e.g. i}
^{24/3}
^{58/1}
^{p 3/3}
You have made some decent points here. Examples are lacking, however, and punctuation, paragraphs etc need work next time. Not a bad start-Although you could do better...

Here are some examples of why I found these aspects of Siya's approach of value...

Which aspects of Siya's approach to responding to student writing, if any, do you find *unhelpful*? Why? Share some examples.

I found the following aspects of Siya's approach unhelpful...

My reasons for saying this, with some examples from the essay's feedback, are...

Do you see indications of sound assessment practice in Siya's responses and approach? Tick your answer in the relevant box, below.

- [Yes] I do see some indications of sound assessment practice in Siya's responses and approach. OR
- [No] I don't see any indications of sound assessment principles in Siya's responses/approach.

If you answered "yes", note these indications and give some examples to justify your answer.

Indications of sound assessment practice in Siya's feedback are...

Here are a few examples which demonstrate Siya's sound approach to assessment...

If you were to suggest to Siya some ways in which he could improve his assessment/feedback practice, what guidance would you give? Offer some specific suggestions and explain your rationale.

I suggest that your feedback to students could be enhanced in the following ways...because...

The Human Assessor

Have you ever sat down to write an essay after a *long* day of lectures? You had an argument with a friend earlier, followed by a headache, and your essay is not the only work which you must still get done for tomorrow.

Do you think that you are now able to write an essay to the best of your ability? Under the circumstances, you may agree that this is doubtful. Nevertheless, having left the essay until this time, you need to persist regardless so that you can meet your deadline.

When it comes to the assessment of your students' work, it is useful to be mindful that you *are* human, and that a variety of factors will influence your ability to respond to your students' work judiciously and responsibly. The difference between our own academic work and our tutoring work is that we are *ethically bound* to plan carefully such that human influences impinge as little as possible on our capacity to assess clearly, thoughtfully and thoroughly. Otherwise, do we not risk disadvantaging our students and hindering their learning and development?

What do you think about this point of view?

Here are a few *self-checks* (with suggestions) which may be useful to consider before beginning to assess your students' work:

Do I feel rested enough to focus on my students' work right now?

- **Yes I do** - Go ahead and respond to your students' work.
- **No I don't** - Rather have a good night's sleep and engage with your student's work the next day.
- **No - but I'm meant to return work to my students tomorrow** Okay, take a short rest and then continue with your assessment...but next time, do plan ahead so that assessment work is *not* left until the night before.

What's my academic load like at the moment?

- **Good** - Begin reading and responding to your student's work.
- **Bad - but I've put aside time to do some assessment work now. I'll focus on my other work later.** Great.
- **Horrible** - I have a huge deadline for the morning so I need to focus on that now, then tomorrow I'll begin with my student's work because that's only due back to them at the end of the week. Perfect.
- **Ugly** - I have a deadline for the morning *and* my student's assignments are due back tomorrow. This is a tough predicament. What do you suggest this tutor does now, and why?

Is my space conducive to focussed work?

- **Yes, I'm settled.** Great.
- **No - the dog is whining and my digs mate is ranting that someone used the last of the coffee.** Check on the dog. Feed? Cuddle? Call of nature? Remind your digs mate that *Spar* is open 24/7. Otherwise move to a quieter room, or over to the library. Do whatever you need to do in order to find or regain your focus. Switching off your phone should help too!
- **No - it's too quiet.** You could put on some background music/head phones or 'white' noise, like rain sounds on *YouTube* or the whirring of a desk fan.

Is this the time of day/night when I'm generally most alert?

- **Yes** - This is an ideal time to assess your students' work.
- **Not really - but it's the only gap I have today.** Okay so take the gap if you must, but be mindful that this is not your best time of day and *actively mitigate against this*. Make sure to return to these assignments/projects on another day when you are alert, to check that you have assessed in a way which is reliable and fair. Alternatively, how about pausing until tomorrow and prioritising the time of day when your students' work *will* receive your best attention?
- **No - this isn't the time of day when I'm most alert. I am really not a morning/evening/late night person.** Wait until tomorrow then. Plan your day such that you can focus on your students' work during a time when you feel *most* rested and attentive.

Am I feeling emotionally stable?

- **Yes I am** - Carry on.
- **Not really** - Okay...how about a pause? A few deep breaths, a cup of tea, a chat with a friend? Maybe a run down campus, taking a hot shower or spending a few minutes on *facebook/YouTube* would help? *Whatever* it takes to steady yourself - do it. Then get back to your assessment work. Pace yourself and take regular breaks as you need them.
- **No - but I've still got time so I can leave my students' work for a while until this issue is sorted out and I'm feeling more 'together'.** Well planned.
- **Definitely not. I'm in serious crisis, but feedback is due to my students tomorrow.** Contact your tutor co-ordinator or course lecturer *immediately* and explain the circumstances. Note that this is a serious option and should not be entered into lightly. If you are genuinely not in a position to make contact with your tutor co-ordinator or the course lecturer personally, ask a friend or family member to do so on your behalf. There may be the possibility of an extension on the task, failing which another tutor or the course teaching assistant/lecturer may be able to assist by taking on your immediate assessment load.

Once a way forward has been determined, contact your tutorial group to apologise and explain the interim plan. Your tutor co-ordinator/departmental administrator may offer to do this on your behalf if you are not in a position to do so. As soon as you are well again, however, be certain to make contact with your students and apologise so that the relationship of trust which you have worked to establish, remains intact. Thereafter, take steps to try and ensure that as far as possible such an issue does not re-occur. While tutoring is a serious commitment, should you have grave concerns about your ability to continue at any point, speak with your tutor co-ordinator or other relevant member of staff as a matter of urgency.

Do I have any prior assumptions about my student's work and/or ability?

- **Yes - and rightly so. This student is lazy, sloppy and never pays attention to spelling and grammar.** Do you have any suggestions for this tutor?

.....

.....

- **Maybe - actually when I think about it, yes. When I see X's name, I automatically expect poor work/excellent work.** Share some ideas with this tutor as to how they could work with these prior assumptions towards the students' benefit:

.....

.....

- **No - I don't have any prior assumptions. I always mark with a 'clean slate'.** Do you have any thoughts about this tutor's approach?

.....

.....

Notes...

Let's consider some other important assessment-related questions...

Am I clear about the assignment/essay question/task with which my students need to engage?	How will I assess my students' work - electronically or in hard copy ?	What are the pros and cons of responding to my students' work electronically? Responding in hard copy?	How does the process of marking and record-keeping work in my department and/or in this year group?
There is a student in your group who appears to be experiencing academic difficulties, without signs of progress. What approach would you take, if any?	What is the weighting of this task (if any) towards my students' term, semester or year mark?	Have my students been informed about the assessment criteria for this task? Do my students understand these criteria?	One of your students is in jeopardy of losing her DP owing to unsubmitted work. What could/should you do?
One of your students has failed a recent essay and comes to you on the verge of tears, saying that he is thinking of giving up the course. How could you respond to this student?	Add your questions here...	Is this a formative or summative assessment task?	How many essays/projects/tests etc. will I be assessing?
If moderation takes place, am I clear about how the process will work?	Will there be a moderation process in place, before work is returned to my students?	Jot down any ideas & questions of your own here...	Is there a limit to how much assessment time will be expected of me, or is assessment an open-ended aspect of my tutoring work?
If no moderation is planned (and if I would find this useful) could I request moderation?	Inspiration?	You think that one of your students may have plagiarised. <i>What now?</i>	How much time (approximately) have I planned to spend on each piece of work?
Are my students 100% clear about what this assessment task is asking of them?	Do I need more clarity about which assessment criteria my students are expected to meet?	Is assessment work included in my tutoring remuneration, or am I compensated additionally for assessment work?	Questions? Worries?

Consider your assessment-related role, responsibilities and challenges.

Reflecting upon the term *assidere* ('to sit beside') and drawing on what you have learned in this chapter, how do you *now* conceive of *your* role in the assessment of your students' work?

I view my role in the assessment of my students' work as...

How do you view your *assessment-related responsibilities*?

Why do you think these are important for your students' learning?

My assessment-related responsibilities are...

I think that these responsibilities are important for my student's learning because...

How could you work toward meeting your responsibilities and expectations of yourself? *Outline* some examples.

I can try to meet my assessment-related responsibilities and my expectations of myself in this regard, in the following ways...

.....

.....

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.....

As a tutor, what are your *current/past challenges* with regard to assessment?

My assessment-related challenges are/have been...

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

How could you and/or did you address these challenges?

I can work/did work to address these challenges by...

.....

.....

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.....

.....

Reflections on *Integrating Assessment for Learning and Teaching*

Use the spaces below to note down any thoughts about your assessment-related role and responsibilities in your tutoring work.

IDEAS	QUESTIONS
CONCERNS	INSPIRATIONS
OTHER	

Reply to your friend's email here. Make sure that you share a comprehensive summary of the chapter, along with your thoughts on the various issues.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.



Engaging with Diversity in Tutorial Spaces **Chapter 4**

CHAPTER 4

Engaging with Diversity in Tutorial Spaces

Synonyms for the word “diversity”

[variety – assortment – array – multiplicity – collection – mixture – wealth – range – medley – melange – mix]

Antonyms of “diversity”

[conformity – homogeneity – likeness – uniformity – sameness – agreement – resemblance – identicalness – correspondence – similitude]

In this chapter we examine diversity and consider the ways in which diversity relates to teaching and learning. *Engaging with Diversity in Tutorial Spaces* addresses oppression and how this differs from social injustice, including a focus on micro-aggressions, emotional labour and identity. These discussions are viewed through a socio-political lens and offer regular examples with the aim of making concepts accessible. Some of the ideas in this chapter may already be known to you, some may not be. Feel free to consider the offerings and adapt them to your context and purpose. You are encouraged to enter into this space with an open mind.

What is diversity? Why should diversity matter in tutorial spaces?

Diversity refers to the wide variety of people within any particular context, in this case, tutorial spaces. If one works from the premise that tutorials endeavour to create engaging, beneficial, productive learning spaces in which *all* students can develop within their respective disciplines, then a tutor’s awareness of and respect for potential diversities within the group is *critical to the learning process of students*. Sensitivity to the multiplicity of students in your tutorial group has the potential to enable teaching and learning because diversity is valued rather than feared. People are respected instead of being othered.

Diversity is considered a social justice issue, as being aware of different identities and contexts is essential to ensuring that people who face social injustices and oppression are considered. Social justice refers to an idea that aims to improve society in terms of the injustices which people encounter on a daily basis. The oppression of particular groups and identities is prevalent in society and can be addressed through a variety of avenues, one of which is the teaching and learning space.

Can you think of any other benefits of a diversity of students in tutorial spaces, which may contribute to the shared teaching and learning project?

What if you are not aware of the issues which people within a particular community face?

That's okay - but do some research. *Google* and *YouTube* are wonderful places for learning about and understanding the lived experiences of fellow human beings. Engaging with people is another valuable way to learn, although this is a feasible option only if the person from an oppressed group is not pressured to engage unwillingly, and to do the emotional labour of explaining their oppression. The notion of emotional labour will be expanded upon later, in the section *What is emotional labour?*

Is diversity relevant in faculties apart from Humanities?

Social justice and diversity are often raised in the course work of Humanities subjects, while not as often or at all in other subjects. It is useful for Humanities tutors to have a clear understanding of the issues involved in these kinds of topics, so as to be able to facilitate conversations which are mutually respectful and inclusive of *all* lived experiences and perspectives. It is likely that, as a Humanities tutor, during the course of your degree you will have gathered some of the understandings and skills needed to facilitate diversity-related dialogue.

It is *particularly important*, however, that tutors in faculties *other* than Humanities also familiarise themselves with these issues, as these tutors may not have encountered these previously as a *direct part* of their degree. No matter what subject or discipline one may be studying, there are inevitably social forces at play which need to be understood, so that teaching and learning can flourish. Students join courses with particular kinds of identities, backgrounds, knowledge, or what is known as “social capital”, which inevitably affect their learning. Tutors need to be cognisant of this in working with different students and what they bring with them to the learning and teaching space.

What are some of the terms which are worth understanding before engaging with the issue of diversity in tutorial spaces?

Identity refers to *your sense of belonging* to a certain social/political/ideological etc. group.

Examples of Identities

- **Race** [e.g. Coloured, Black, White, Indian]
- **Disability** – physical, cognitive, psychological and psychiatric disabilities
 - **e.g.** anxiety disorder
 - mobility loss
 - depression
 - dyslexia
 - chronic fatigue syndrome
 - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
 - diabetes
 - bipolar mood disorder
 - vision loss
 - chronic pain
 - autism spectrum disorder
 - hearing loss.
- **Gender/gender diversity** [e.g. cisgender, non-binary, transgender, a-gender, gender fluid]
- **Sex** [e.g. female, intersex, male]
- **Sexuality/sexually diverse identities** [e.g. bisexual, lesbian, straight, pansexual, asexual]
- **Nationality** [e.g. Zambian, South African, Namibian]

- **Religion/diverse religious identities** [e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Atheism, Agnosticism]

Can you think of any other identities?

A person can hold many different identities at the same time, all of which contribute to that person's life in a variety of ways.

Some identities are not visible or noticeable, while others are apparent. A person's religious beliefs and sexual orientation, for instance, are not always easily discernible. This means that *should we wish to avoid stereotyping*, we need to be aware that a person may hold an identity different to what we assume their default identity to be.

Assuming that a person is straight, **for example**, is potentially offensive and oftentimes incorrect. Heterosexuality is often invisible and accepted and, in the light of this, it becomes unquestionable. It follows, therefore, that anything which is different from the 'norm' becomes hyper-visible and people who fall outside the 'norm' are then expected to defend or justify who they are.

At any given time there is likely to be at least one queer person in the room - in other words, someone who identifies as being in the LGBTQIA+ community [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, plus other identities]. In your tutorial group, there will likely be students who *don't* identify as straight and cisgender, identities which are often considered to be the 'norm'. Cisgender means that you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth. **For example**, when you were born the doctor said, "*It's a boy!*" and to this day you still consider yourself to be/you still identify as a man then you are what is termed "cisgender". In other words, you identify with the gender which you were assigned at birth.

What is identity politics?

- Identity politics refers to the *way* in which your identity (and other people's identities) are *politicised by society*.
- This politicisation may be used to argue for justice and equal rights within various groups. **For example**, the LGBTQIA+ community advocates for people within this community to have the legal right to marry their partners, in countries throughout the world where equality before the law does not yet exist.

How does intersectionality work?

- Intersectionality refers to the *overlapping or intersection* of different identities.
- **For example**, someone might identify as a *black woman*. This means that this person has two intersecting identities, both of which - in this instance - lack social privilege.

How do we go about working with privilege?

Holding socio-political privilege means that *within a particular identity*, a person is privileged by society. **For example**, it may be argued that white people possess privilege - whether or not they are aware of this. White privilege does not refer to economic privilege, although the two can intersect, rather it refers to *inherent social privilege* which, by its very nature, allows for easier navigation of society.

- *Recognising one's privilege* is essential to navigating spaces in which that privilege presents itself. If, **for example**, you find yourself in a space where your privilege (which originates from one, or more identities) helps you to navigate that space, *recognise* that it does so and *attempt to use it to the benefit of a person* who does *not* hold that same level of privilege. **For instance**, if a white person is privy to a racist 'joke' they could make it known that racism is not okay, rather than being a silent bystander.

It is entirely possible to *hold* privilege within one identity, while *lack* it in another identity. A person might be wealthy economically-speaking, **for example**, while at the same time be suffering the social disadvantages of being black, and enduring overt racism as well as micro-aggressions. You will find an explanation of micro-aggressions further along, under the heading *What are micro-aggressions?* Someone may identify as a man, **for instance**, which comes with substantial privilege, while simultaneously identifying with the LGBTQIA+ community, which in turn lacks socio-political privilege.

Note - *It is important to bear in mind that privilege does not mean that one is without difficulties. Privilege simply means that one's problems are not as a result of the identity/ies which privileges/privilege one. This is in contrast to the oppression faced by people within other identities, who can attribute the social injustices they face to that particular identity.*

What are some of the signs that people hold privilege? (often without realising it)

- People don't conceal their handbags or lock their car doors as you walk by.
- Your religion/faith (or lack thereof) is socially respected and accepted.
- You are able to show affection to your partner in public without being the recipient of disapproving looks.
- You have never had to go out of your way to access quality medication and healthcare facilities.
- You have never had to be concerned about whether or not you will be able to physically access a building.
- You and your parents/guardians have been in a position to choose the kind of high school you attended.
- You have never had to be concerned about where your next meal would come from.
- You do not fear for your personal safety in terms of sexual harassment and abuse.
- The cashier offers to serve you first, even if you are standing at the back of the queue.
- You are able to use the public toilet assigned to your gender without being questioned, or told that you are in the wrong bathroom.
- Your family has owned property for one or more generations.

Can you think of any other signs that a person holds privilege?

How privileged are we/are we not?

BuzzFeed invites you to **check(list) your privilege** in this **online quiz** –

https://www.buzzfeed.com/regajha/how-privileged-are-you?utm_term=.apWQL0673q#.qhWj9wBnJD

Note - this quiz is particularly relevant to an American context, although it is still valid in the South African context in many respects.

After working through this section about privilege, *what are your thoughts?*

What is emotional labour?

- Emotional labour refers to the work that any given individual might be forced to do when asked questions about one or more of their identities, by a person who does not hold that same identity.
- **For example** – A white person asking a person of colour to explain the oppression they suffer and then dismissing such oppression (unless answers to questions are forthcoming) **entails difficult, unnecessary and emotionally draining work** for the person of colour.

What are micro-aggressions?

Micro-aggressions are the *subtle, oftentimes unintentional, indirect* **comments and/or actions of discrimination** directed at marginalised groups of people. Asking someone “*So like, what are you?*” when referring to their ethnicity, is an example of micro-aggression.

Other examples of micro-aggressions:

- “*So how do you have sex?*”
- “*You’re the best-spoken black person I know.*”
- “*Can I touch your hair?*”
- “*You’re really pretty for a dark-skinned girl.*”

The above remarks are relevant to interactions between people of differing identities. For example, a white person asking to touch the hair of a person of colour without regard for that person’s bodily autonomy and without consideration of the micro-aggression being enacted, may be offensive.

Can you share an example of a micro-aggression from your own experience, or from a friend's/acquaintance's experience perhaps?

Are you interested in learning more about micro-aggressions? If so, you may find the following texts useful.

Kiyun, a photographer, asked her friends at Fordham University's Lincoln Center Campus to share an instance of micro-aggression from their own lives.

See images of 21 students' placards on the BUZZFEED blog - https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/racial-microaggressions-you-hear-on-a-daily-basis?utm_term=.xn4e3XPZbR#.vcnbnwPjgv

Some examples of racial micro-aggressions can be found at - <http://sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf>

Micro-aggression themes in this pdf include -

Alien in own land | Colour blindness | Assumption of criminal status |

Denial of individual racism | Myth of meritocracy | How to offend without really trying

Adapted from Wing, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, Esquilin (2007). Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. *American Psychologist*, 62, 4, 271-286.

What is oppression? How does it differ from social injustice?



“Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would have trouble going past the wires to get anywhere. There is no physical property of any one wire, nothing that the closest scrutiny could discover, that will reveal how a bird could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way. It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. *It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.*” (Marilyn Frye, 1983, “Oppression”, in *Politics Of Reality – Essays In Feminist Theory*, own emphasis.)

In keeping with this analogy, each ‘wire’ holding together the ‘cage’ of oppression is a social injustice. One may well have experienced a number of social injustices, however *unless they are systematic in nature*, they do not constitute oppression. In other words, one can experience a social injustice without being oppressed, as oppression takes place when individual social injustices systematically work together to undermine a person and/or group of people.

How can we navigate tutorial spaces with diversity and identities in mind?

- **We can begin by informing ourselves.** If you are not sure of the specifics of a particular gender identity, **for example**, *google* it. Unless the person with whom you are engaging is *openly offering* you their lived experience as an example, *do not* expect them to do the work of explaining.
- If the person with whom you are interacting is willing to share their lived experiences, **be open to listening and learning** from them. Human interaction can be one of the most significant ways of becoming conscious of social issues.
- **Work towards** *becoming more cognisant* of your own identities and *how* these may relate to the identities of others.
- If you recognise that you have some form of privilege, **try to use this privilege** to the advantage of a person who doesn't hold that same privilege. If you hold privilege as a straight person, **for instance**, 'call out' homophobic behaviour/comments and explain to people that they are engaging in oppressive behaviour.
- If you do not now, or have not in the past, value/d people of all identities on the same level (or thought that their rights were not as important as the rights of others), **identify** where those beliefs come from and **work to re-evaluate** them.
- If you witness any form of racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, Islamophobia (and/or the like) within the tutorial you are facilitating, **come to the aid of the oppressed person/s**.
- If you are not sure of the exact meaning of the above-mentioned terms and how apparent such discrimination needs to be to warrant intervention and/or investigation, **speak with the relevant year co-ordinator, course lecturer or your tutor co-ordinator**.
- **Remember**, importantly, that *your willingness* to be inclusive as well as your openness to diversity and what these diversities bring to teaching and learning relationships *is often much more important than* getting everything technically correct. Perhaps it is more about demonstrating a willingness to be aware of whether/not we are working from a privileged or marginalised position in terms of identity and 'checking' ourselves regularly?

What do you think?

Here are some examples:

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity may be understood to reproduce a form of systematic oppression which says, for example, that as a woman you are supposed to be 'this' kind of way and as a man you are expected to be 'that' kind of way. In this way, manhood and womanhood are positioned as the most 'natural' ways of being. In the light of heteronormativity, a variety of other legitimate ways of being and/or identifying in relation to gender and sexual orientation are subjugated and perceived as 'unnatural' or 'deviant'. There exists the assumption that these 'other' ways need to be 'fixed' or 'corrected', as if they are some kind of moral pathology.

While the use of heterosexual examples in learning and teaching spaces is *not* problematic in and of itself, *exclusive use of such examples can be alienating* for some students which in turn makes it uncomfortable for them to learn effectively in such environments.

Family structures

In our tutoring work, we may tend to make reference to ‘traditional’ one father-one mother (two-parent) families with biological children. Is this perhaps because we have grown up in such a family or because this is considered most ‘conventional’ and acceptable in society - and is therefore privileged above other kinds of family structures?

Could we be more inclusive in our use of examples, by making reference to some of the following family structures, for instance?

Adopted children | orphaned children | child-headed families | two-mother families | fostered children | single-parent families | two-father families | blended families | guardian-led families | inter-generational families | grandparent-headed families.

Gender

Gender is often confused with sex. A person’s sex relates to their biological physiology - for example female, male, or intersex. *The biological sex with which one was born, may not be the same as the gender with which one identifies.* Gender is widely considered to be a social construct, meaning that it doesn’t truly exist other than through the lens of society. This means that gender can be perceived differently by different people, in a variety of contexts. Gender may be expressed differently by individual people who do not have to adhere to the conventional binary of being either a ‘man’ or ‘woman’. People have the right to identify with whichever gender they feel most comfortable. There is a variety of genders - over 30 in all - with which people identify.

In the light of this and in working to create open, safe, mutually respectful spaces in which learning is possible for every student, try to avoid referring to students as “*ladies and gentlemen*” or “*guys and girls*”. Gender-neutral group greetings such as “*Hi people*”, “*Hi everyone*”, “*Hi first years*”, **for example**, are inclusive of *all* people, regardless of their gender identity.

Another way in which you could be respectful of gender is to ask your students if they would like to share their **preferred pronouns** with you. Preferred pronouns are how people would like to be referred to as; **for example** *she/her*, *they/them*, *he/him*. These pronouns are used to refer to students no matter how they present their gender on any given day. How might we do the subtle transformative work in tutorial spaces, which does not reproduce binaries such as male/female?

If you are involved in suggesting texts for your students, or when you make use of examples as you explain something **for instance**, do your best to select those which work against the reproduction of binaries - whether these binaries refer to race, sex, gender, sexual orientation or the like.

How else do you think we can create (head) space for diversity, so that it can enrich learning and teaching spaces?

An extensive range of people in any given space is of value, as is a variety of perspectives, identities and opinions which hold the potential to enrich teaching and learning spaces.

- With diversity comes a myriad of perspectives which enliven and broaden and deepen our understanding of and engagement with particular issues.

- Work to foster a conducive environment for the variety of identities which will be held by the students in your tutorial group. Be willing to let students know if you think that they have infringed upon the rights of their peers, and do your best to support marginalised groups.
- Learn how to recognise when a conversation is no longer a constructive debate which enhances understanding, and has rather become damaging to people of a particular identity. This is a responsibility which can be shared with students in your group.

A few more points to contemplate...

One would hope that even challenging situations might work to further the critical engagement so necessary for the overall academic project, as well as future teaching and learning relationships within the tutorial group. **How might we facilitate a mutually respectful environment for tutorial interactions, even if these become challenging at times?**

How could you as a tutor help to bring to a close unhelpful, naïve and/or discriminatory comments which are causing dialogue to shut down and learning to cease?

Reflection

In this chapter we have worked through a variety of complex and often-sensitive issues.

Is there anything more which you would like to find out, speak about, share, and/or question?

Is there anything *worrying* you?

***Inspiring* you?**

Is there anything which you have found *fascinating*?

Anything *angering* you?

Has anything in this chapter *challenged* you?

***Surprised* you?**

***Touched* you?**

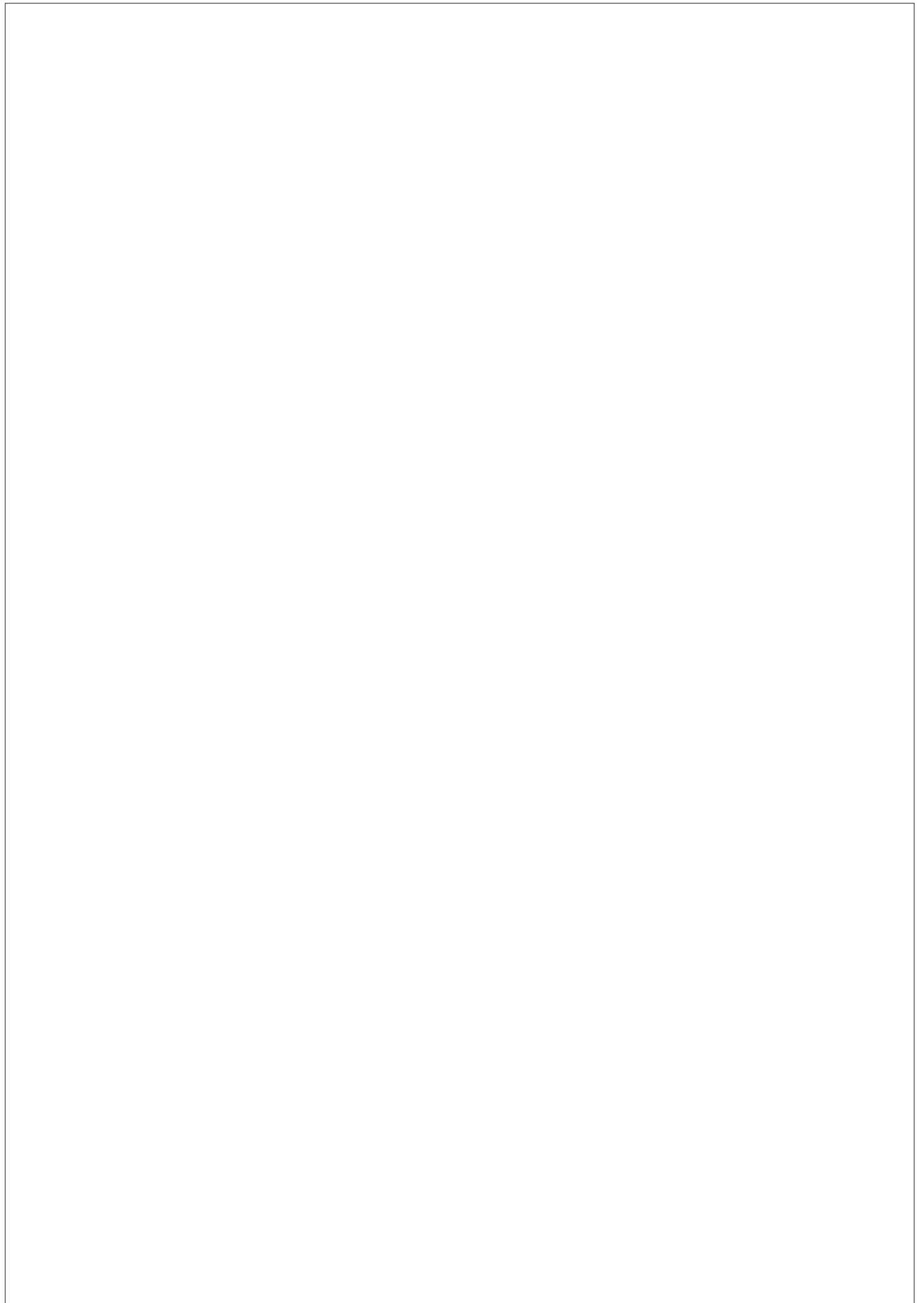
***Frustrated* you?**

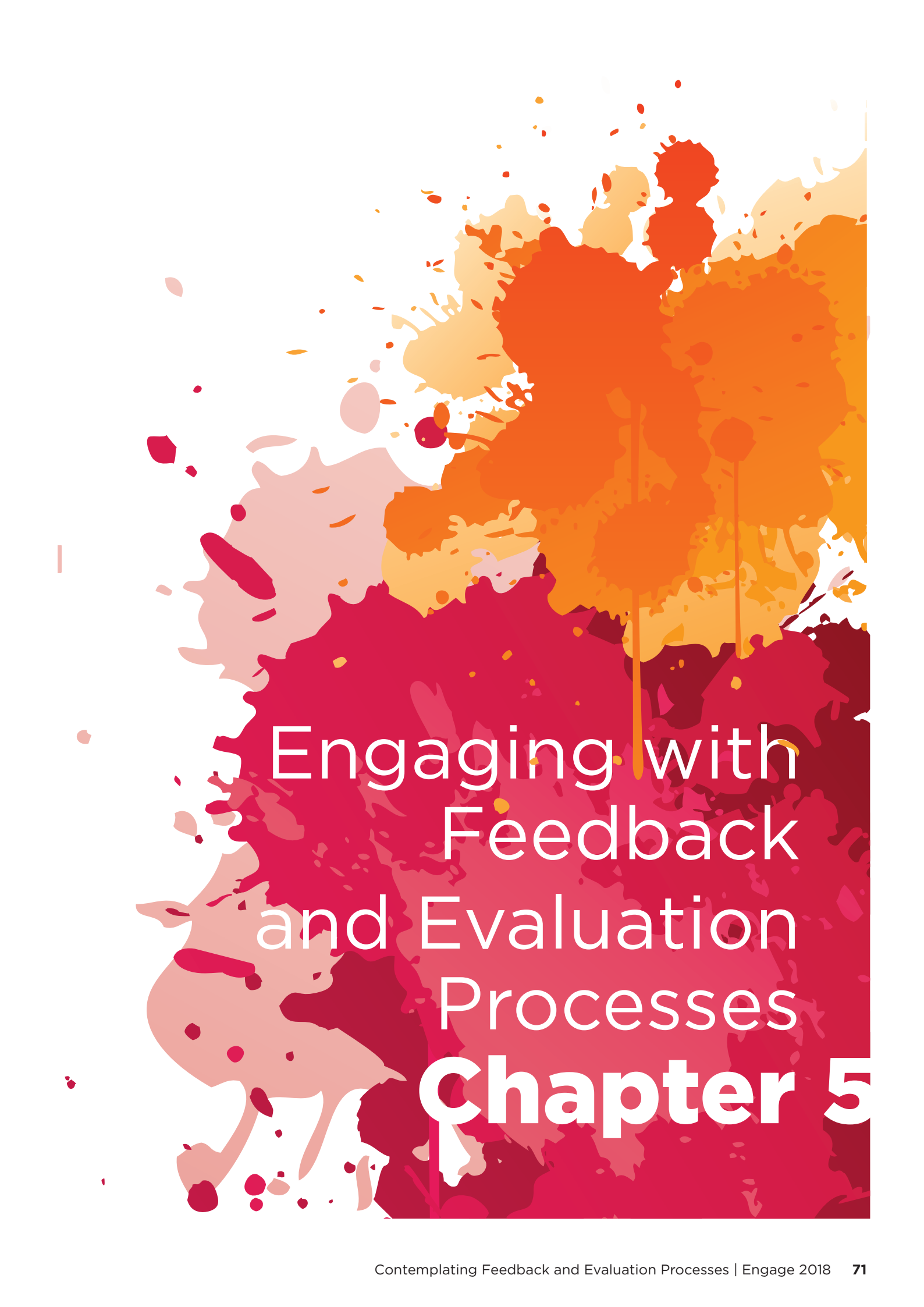
***Shut* you down?**

Express these thoughts more fully in one or more of the following ways...

- ...mind maps
- ...pictures
- ...poetry
- ...diagrams
- ...story
- ...tables
- ...whichever way you prefer.

(continued overleaf)



The background of the page is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features large, overlapping splashes of orange and red paint, creating a textured, energetic feel. In the lower-left corner, there is a stylized, pink cartoon animal, possibly a dog or a pig, with a red collar and a small red bow. The animal is looking towards the right. The overall color palette is warm and bold, with a mix of bright oranges, deep reds, and soft pinks.

Engaging with Feedback and Evaluation Processes **Chapter 5**

CHAPTER 5

Contemplating Feedback and Evaluation Processes for Teaching and Learning Purposes

Working with feedback and evaluation in teaching and learning contexts holds the potential to enable tutors, students and lecturers to improve through experience.

In this chapter we begin by reflecting on your experience of sharing feedback and we consider the impact of this experience on your understanding of feedback from a tutor's perspective. We consider how data generation and evaluation differ and examine the variety of data sources with which we might engage when seeking feedback. We then consider what is meant by the triangulation of sources and examine the contribution of triangulation to effective evaluation practice. We contemplate the *what*, *when*, *who* and *why* of engaging with feedback as part of teaching and learning, followed by a conversation about the ethics of evaluation practice. Finally, we look through some practical ways in which you could engage with your students through feedback and you're invited to share ideas of your own.

Reflection

Think of a *positive* experience of sharing feedback on teaching and learning (for example, a course evaluation) which you have had...

- **How would you describe this experience?**

- **Why did you find it helpful and/or valuable?**

Remember an *unhelpful* experience in which you were asked to give feedback on a course and/or the teaching of that course...

- **How would you describe this experience?**

- **Why did you consider this experience to be less-than-ideal?**

Looking ahead - what are your ideas?

In the light of your experiences above, and with a view to strengthening your tutoring practice as well as the learning of students in your group, **what are your current ideas** around working with feedback?

What might you choose to do and what might you purposefully avoid when inviting your students to feed back, for instance?

What is the difference between data generation and evaluation?

The Rhodes University *Policy on Evaluation of Teaching and Courses* (2014) describes evaluation as a kind of *research* into teaching and course design. Evaluation is also a form of research into tutoring. When we ask students for feedback on our teaching/tutoring, we are collecting or generating data (information) to enable us to evaluate our work. Student feedback does not in itself constitute evaluation, as this feedback is only one source of data. As with any piece of research, findings can only be made once *multiple* data sources have been consulted, analysed and reflected upon. This analysis and reflection on data is what constitutes evaluation.

Which sources of data can I draw on when seeking feedback?

There is a variety of sources which may include your students, fellow tutors, your tutor co-ordinator, yourself, course lecturers, literature of teaching and learning, as well as the literature of your discipline.

What is triangulation?

Gathering data around a particular focus from *various sources or perspectives* is known as triangulation.

Why does triangulation form a valuable part of sound evaluation practice?

Triangulating information strengthens one's inquiry by enriching and deepening potential insight. Triangulation helps to ensure the validity of a study's findings.

For example, if students offer a particular perspective through their feedback, your self-reflection and/or a peer's input on this issue would be valuable in terms of offering a more holistic view. In addition, the exploration of relevant literature can either support or challenge other sources of feedback on the subject under investigation.

What value does feedback hold for teaching and learning?

Corresponding/agreeing feedback provides *reassurance*.

For example – Student feedback confirms that students are clear about what was discussed during the week's tutorial. This enables tutors to keep up-to-date with how their students are progressing, and validates the approach used to facilitate this learning.

Contrasting/disagreeing feedback *challenges* ways of doing and being – it calls for further *interrogation and exploration*. **For example**, a student may ask a question or point out a concern through feedback. This means that you then have the opportunity to consider how you could clarify this point, and/or how you might encourage the student/group of students to explore further options for resolution of the question.

When can I invite feedback?

You can invite feedback *whenever* - so long as the timing of your inquiry is *relevant* to your *purpose*.

Traditionally, feedback is sought at the *end* of a course or section, semester or academic year. This **summative evaluation 'event'** is concerned with the evaluation **of** teaching and learning once it has taken place, with the aim of *informing future practice*.

Formative evaluation, on the other hand, is interested in evaluation **for** teaching and learning. Formative evaluation is part of an **ongoing process** which can take place **at any point** during a course of study, in relation to a variety of issues. Here are **some examples** of ways in which you might evaluate where your students are located in terms of their learning and understanding, and/or what they think about how tutorials are progressing:

- at the *beginning or end* of a tutorial (for example, reflection on the previous week's discussion or an exploration of students' already existing knowledge on a topic to be explored that session)
- *during* tutorials (to clarify or deepen conceptualisation)
- *in-between* tutorials (via email and/or social media, for example)
- *during* a course/term.

Who can share feedback?

It may be helpful to consider the process of evaluation as a *dialogue or exchange* between various *teaching and learning partners*.

These **evaluation collaborations** can take place between:

- tutors and tutorial co-ordinators; tutors and lecturers; tutors and students; tutors and tutors
- between students and with students: students' self-evaluation of learning and participation in their courses and tutorials; feedback on their experience of courses; student feedback on their tutorials and tutors' facilitation.

How do beliefs and values impact evaluation practice?

Being conscious of our beliefs *informs our practice*. In other words, if we are mindful of *why we do the things we do*, this creates space for flexibility and development within our tutoring/facilitation/teaching practice. If someone considers themselves to be a humanist, **for example**, this person would be more interested in eliciting qualitative data and engaging with people's thoughts, experiences and ideas, than in statistics.

Ethical Considerations in Evaluation Practice

Ethics are *foundational* in terms of data generation and evaluation practice and are based on the principle of *do no harm*. Why? Unethical procedures jeopardise the validity of evaluation, which is rendered *invalid* through unethical research.

What are the elements of ethical evaluation practice? Why are these of value?

- **Respect** for the dignity of teaching and learning partners is part of ethical evaluation practice. Is it about 'us' retrieving information from 'them'? Alternatively, could it be about seeking understanding and creating meaning together, within our mutual teaching and learning context?
- **Transparency** - Be open with your evaluation collaborators about the *reason/s* for your inquiry. Why are you asking for this feedback? What will be 'done' with/about peoples' responses? You could even discuss with partners how such a process might be helpful and what the best ways of doing it would be. Timeously share insights from the feedback with your students and explain/discuss/negotiate what (if any) action will follow from their insights.
- **Power** - Be mindful of potential *power disparities* inherent in certain roles and relationships (e.g. student - tutor; tutor - senior tutor; tutor co-ordinator - tutor) and think about how you can work to circumvent disparities. Attempting to mitigate such power differentials enables data of a higher quality or in other words, data which is *fit for purpose*.
- **Confidentiality** - Anonymity is important when inviting feedback, so that participants feel at liberty to express their views honestly and constructively. When discussing feedback with your students once data has been generated, any identifying details of those who have shared feedback must be protected, unless prior permission has been sought from participants to do otherwise.

How can we elicit feedback?

Feedback may be invited in dynamic, stimulating and engaging ways with the purpose of generating understanding and supporting learning. 'Feeding back' does *not* have to be formal, lengthy, dull, or mechanistic.

Let's look at some ideas for inviting feedback, below.

Resources and inspiration for Ideas 1-6 (below) from Dr Dina Belluigi's *Evaluation of Teaching and Courses PG Dip (HE) Module*, 2015.

Idea 1 - Tutor feedback

It would be helpful for my learning if my tutor...
continued to

did more

did less

Idea 2 - Clarity

From today's tut, one thing which is *clear* to me is -

One thing which is still *unclear* to me is -

Idea 3 - Self-evaluation

Tick the *description/parts of descriptions* which best apply to you.

I would describe my preparation for today's tut as...

- ...**Great**. I worked to the best of my ability, spending time on each task and finishing everything I needed to do. I did a bit extra as well.
- ...**Good**. I got through everything that we needed to do carefully and in good time, although I skimmed through the one part.
- ...**Average**. I got through most of the tasks but didn't spend enough time thinking about and writing down my answers. I've got a general understanding of the topic.
-**Not ideal**. I did the bare minimum and just hoped to cruise under the 'radar' today.
-**Poor**. I didn't do anything to prepare for today's tut.

-**None-of-the-above**. Add your own description of your preparation here:

Why do you describe your preparation for today's tut as you have done, above?

What could you *change* in future to improve and strengthen your preparation?

What *benefits* could there be from this improvement in your preparation?

Note: This feedback sheet could be adapted to explore your **students' level of participation** in any given tutorial in terms of their level of thinking, writing, reading, attentiveness, discussion, and so on.

Idea 4 – Self-evaluation

In this course, in order to reach my goals of -

I need to continue to...

.....
I need to do more...

.....
I need to do less...

Idea 5 – Eliciting your students’ reactions

What is *your reaction* to today’s discussion? I’m interested to know your thoughts...

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Idea 6 – Your experience

In today’s tutorial we’ve talked about identity politics, emotional labour and micro-aggressions.

Describe your experience of *these concepts* (in one word) -

- **Identity politics**

.....

- **Emotional labour**

.....

- **Micro-aggressions**

.....

Reflecting on the above suggestions for generating data/inviting feedback, what do you think of each?

Idea 1 – Tutor feedback

Idea 2 – Clarity

Idea 3 – Self-evaluation: preparation/participation

Idea 4 – Self-evaluation: goals

Idea 5 – Eliciting students' reactions

Idea 6 – Your experience: concepts

**What ideas do you have of *other ways in which you could invite feedback?*
Outline these here in such a way that your fellow tutors could make use of your ideas:**

.....

.....

Reflecting on the discussions in this chapter, *Engaging with Feedback and Evaluation Processes for Teaching and Learning*, **outline at least three new things which you have learned.**

1)

2)

3)

.....

.....

Now in relation to this chapter, jot down:

Something/s which has challenged you

.....

.....

Something/s which has sparked your curiosity

.....

.....

Something/s with which you disagree

.....

.....

Something/s you are keen to try

.....

.....

Something/s which didn't make sense

.....

.....

reflect

debate
prepare
liberate
practice
challenge
write
develop
understand
facilitate
DISAGREE
discuss
create
read
integrate
encapsulate
ENRICH
identify
participate
learn
think
listen
contemplate
plan
initiate
inquire
substantiate
construct
invite
confront
anticipate
enable
respect
STRATEGISE
consolidate
contribute
imagine
value
BALANCE
RESPOND
co-operate
assess
question