#### VOICES FROM THE FIELD

#### How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?

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This fourth iteration of Voices from the Field highlights some of the many meanings and practices of assessment as faculty/academic staff, professional staff, and students define it and as they situate it in relation to students-as-partners work. The goal of this section of the journal is to offer a venue for a wide range of contributors to address important questions around and aspects of students-as-partners work without going through the intensive submission, peer-review, and revision processes. For this iteration of Voices, we invited responses to the question: "In what ways can students-as-partners work inform assessment?" Recognizing that assessment means different things in different contexts, we invited contributors to specify what definition they are working with.

As we expected, people's definitions, arguments, and examples were highly diverse. Contributors' definitions reflect differences of geographical location, level (course, program, institutional), and focus or priority. Regarding the last of those, definitions include reference to teachers offering opportunity to students to demonstrate knowledge and/or skills; dynamic, mutual conversations between educational shareholders; an opportunity to honor knowledge, experience, and engagement; a process of engaging students' language, agency, selfauthorship, and self-directed learning goals in dialogue with course learning goals; instructors' and administrators' evaluations of teaching; the assessment of learning and development Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **218** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1).* https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 across and within complex systems such as degree programs, institutional core curricula, and multitiered co-curricular programs, and more. As this range indicates, there is no single, uniform definition of assessment. What this variation suggests is not so much the need for one agreed-upon definition but rather the need for everyone to be explicit and clear about what they mean by assessment in any given context and in relation to any given practice so that there are not misunderstandings among participants about premises and practices.

Looking across the diversity of definitions and examples, we did see some themes, which we have used to organize the contributions. There are multiple overlaps among the themes, and many contributions could go in more than one category. We invite consideration of overlaps and of differences. We have organized contributions into these broad categories:

- 1. purposes of assessment, such as assessment of individual student learning, of programs, of teachers, or of institutional efforts;
- 2. benefits to students and staff of students-as-partners work in assessment;
- 3. current examples of students as partners in assessment work at the individual course, program, center, and institutional levels; and
- 4. future possibilities for students as partners in assessment work.

We received a total of 26 submissions from 48 contributors. Of these contributors, most were faculty/academic staff (26) or students (17). Contributors also identified themselves as professional staff (3), an administrator, and a postdoctoral fellow. Contributors specified, and we reproduce here, their geographical locations as Bahrain, Canada, England, Ireland, Pakistan, Qatar, Scotland, United Kingdom, and the United States.

#### PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

In this section we include contributions that name the range of purposes that assessment can have and how students can be included as partners in assessment in individual courses, of teachers, of programs, or of institutional efforts.

Assessment in Children's Fiction in Spanish refers to the formative tasks carried out between students, as a group and individually, and the lecturer's role in guiding the learning process towards the achievement of the learning outcomes and a final project to demonstrate these outcomes in a performative way. This small seminar combines around 30 students performing at beginner-intermediate level Spanish and is conducted through Spanish. Therefore, in order to support individual needs, there is a choice of final performative assessment and a series of interim assessments throughout the semester. Each type of final project, all in Spanish—traditional essay, podcast, picture book and commentary of creative process, and audiovisual translation—is explained in rubrics with equal weighting and workload.

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **219** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 In the formative seminars and assignments, discussions shape the possibilities of each final assessment type and clarify the meaning of these rubrics in conversation, providing me with their insights on each type so that I can ascertain, and not just guess, their particular learning needs.

-Pilar Alderete Diez, academic staff/faculty, University of Galway, Ireland, pilar.alderete@universityofgalway.ie

Assessment is the evaluation of teaching by instructors and administration. Historically, assessment means student surveys that ask students about their opinion of the instructor or more recently about their learning experiences. More advanced practices may involve peer observation and teaching portfolio assessment. I have been experimenting with another way of assessing teaching formatively. Students are engaged as partners in conversations about their learning experiences through empathetic interviewing. The goal of these conversations is to "dig deep" into student experience to discover what the instructor doesn't know rather than to validate what the instructor does know about students' learning experiences. Inviting students into the conversation as partners is a necessary precondition. Only students have the knowledge of their own experiences. Instructors bring disciplinary and pedagogical expertise. These conversations help instructors identify learning problems and opportunities from students' experiences. The outcome of these conversations is the stuff of reflection for the instructor's teaching portfolio.

-Robert Fleisig, academic staff/faculty, McMaster University, Canada, <u>robert@mcmaster.ca</u>

The sciences have been slower than other disciplines to adopt justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) content within higher education. Our School of Interdisciplinary Sciences (SIS) aims to strengthen JEDI learning by partnering with students to implement curricular changes across our three programs. Informally, students enrolled in SIS courses are partners assessing whether the course design and structure supported JEDI learning through guided reflection prompts. These reflections will be used to inform modifications of courses within the faculty. Formally, students are partners in that they are leading the design and analysis of these reflections. This work is in collaboration with a growing team of student partners and the SIS instructional team. —Tahmina Shamsheri, student, Canada, <u>shamsht@mcmaster.ca</u> and Katie Moisse, academic staff/faculty, McMaster University, Canada, moissek@mcmaster.ca

## Our partnership consists of a student partner and two faculty members. We are focusing on assessing student perceptions of our large enrolment program to inform future program design through student-led focus groups. We chose to view assessment

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **220** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 as a form of quality assurance in evaluating how students feel about the life sciences program in terms of elitism, the challenges of large enrolment classes, and gaining access to experiential learning opportunities. As educators and learners, it is our responsibility to ensure we continuously assess the design, experience, and accessibility of our programs to further enhance the program's goals, which is why assessment is best conducted in partnerships. We ask critical questions to assess student needs as these programs can lack customized student experiences. By working in partnership, we are able to use both student and faculty experience to make differences in program design and student experiences.

—Jasmin Dhanoa, 4<sup>th</sup>-year Honours Life Science student at McMaster University, Canada, Student, <u>dhanoj1@mcmaster.ca</u>

#### BENEFITS TO STUDENTS AND STAFF

While all contributions could come under this heading, several contributions highlight the particular benefits to students and staff of students-as-partners approaches to assessment. These include developing understanding, insight, and empathy as well as challenging and/or complicating instructors' assumptions about student learning.

#### **Benefits to students**

We are two undergraduate student interns at the University of Aberdeen, currently engaged in a partnership with the Centre for Academic Development with the purpose of working collectively towards programmatic assessment review in a post-digital age. Through this partnership, we have noticed that there is a lack of awareness within the staff and student populations on the differences between formative and summative assessment. Moreover, our partnership has provided the opportunity to share our student perspective on assessment, defined here as incorporating both summative and formative types. Our perspective has been incorporated into the project's development and used to shape staff approaches to assessment. Our experience of being student partners is that such collaborations are an opportunity for sharing knowledge and perspectives, which benefits staff and student stakeholders, in this case through assessment literacy and recognition of the enhanced value of formative assessment. *—Mailie Besson and Samu Turi, undergraduate students, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK, mailie.besson@abdn.ac.uk, samu.turi@abdn.ac.uk* 

# As educational developers at the University of Aberdeen, we offer this piece to complement one authored by our undergraduate student partners, Mailie Besson and Samu Turi. Their reflections adeptly capture the potential for student-staff partnerships in degree-level programme reviews and their contributions towards improved

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **221** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 assessment literacy amongst students and academic staff. As they note, such partnerships enhance practices that inform assessment through shared perspectives and a focus on student voice, resulting in the potential to enhance assessment experiences for students and staff. Here, we define assessment as both formative and summative, and not limited to specific methods. To this observation, and in collaboration with Besson and Turi, we suggest that when students move from data source to partner, more valuable dialogue arises. We advocate collectively for student involvement in programmatic reviews as partners and stakeholders, not just as passive recipients of decisions made surrounding summative and formative assessment practices.

—Joanna Wilson-Scott, Joy Perkins, and Mary Pryor, educational development team, Centre for Academic Development, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK, joanna.wilson-scott@abdn.ac.uk; j.perkins@abdn.ac.uk; m.r.pryor@abdn.ac.uk

Assessment (defined as offering an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and/or skills) can often be synonymous with a core set of personal qualities. From "self-efficacy" in modern parlance to more timeless notions of "motivation," assessments offer persistent flashpoints of qualities that endure in learning. I have always found it interesting that key qualities underpinning successful assessment are frequently not taught within many discipline-specific curricula. Instead, these qualities are either consigned to the co-curriculum or worse, assumed to be picked up along the student journey. Students as partners can have a potentially transformative impact on assessment once we invite students to co-create assessment as part of the main curricula and take it further by collaborating on creating their assessment criteria. Only then will we be in a position to see these critical partnerships pay dividends in the form of meaningful student success. *—Russell Crawford, director of academic innovation and quality, Falmouth University, UK, staff/faculty, Russell.Crawford@falmouth.ac.uk* 

We are a group of tertiary education-level staff who either run or are enrolled as students on a master's in higher education module on assessment and feedback. The experience we focus on involved asynchronous co-construction of a rubric for the module's summative assessment. There were two forms of partnership between module leaders and students being enacted: the rubric's co-construction and development of this submission. The experience of co-constructing the rubric gave voice to the students in shaping and clarifying the module's assessment criteria, engaging with its learning outcomes, and activating discussions around standards and inclusivity, whilst concurrently reducing assessment anxiety. It raised tensions based on the students' dual perspectives as assessor (i.e., rubric designers) and assessee (i.e., having the rubric applied to their own work), and surrounding reaching consensus asynchronously.

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **222** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 However, it scaffolded greater independence, motivation, critical engagement and ownership over learning and assessment processes, whilst informing the students' future pedagogic practices.

—Martin Hawes (student), Katherine Carter (student), Noelia Noel (student), Emma Medland, <u>e.medland@surrey.ac.uk</u> (staff), Shaun Aquilina (student), Julia Brennan (student), Carolyn Clampton (student), Gareth Evans (student), India Merrony (student), William Wilkinson (student), Marie Wilson (student), and Naomi Winstone (staff), United Kingdom

#### Benefits to staff

As an academic working at higher education institutions internationally for more than a decade, I have found that student-staff partnership has enabled me to engage in reciprocal reflections on teaching and learning practices, co-learning, and involving students in curriculum creation. Thus, from my point of view, assessment is the engagement with students in co-creation, learning, and teaching in higher education. For this to happen it is essential to foster the student educator relationship, transparent expectations, a common understanding of the assessment and expected feedback, and student learning preferences to tailor materials and delivery methods and to enhance the overall learning and teaching experiences. It is worth mentioning that student-staff partnership and assessment have improved my teaching and research and has highlighted the students' intention to broaden the use of social media as a teaching and learning tool for collaborative learning (Oyelere et al., 2016; Paliktzoglou & Suhonen, 2014b, 2014a, 2015).

-Vasileios Paliktzoglou, academic staff/faculty, Bahrain Polytechnic, Bahrain, paliktzoglou@gmail.com

Assessment is a measurement of outcomes. It is how a clinical nursing instructor collects information about a student's learning and performance (Gaberson et al., 2018). Formative assessment is a process of ongoing feedback regarding students' performance that will highlight strengths and areas of improvement. In a clinical area, formative assessment can be difficult, and instructors struggle with being objective. A partnership with students to help with what worked and did not work in giving feedback in regards to formative assessment was helpful in refining a formative assessment tool used in clinical areas. As a result of the collaboration, both the clinical instructor and the student presented at the assessment showcase held this year by Qatar University and the University of Calgary in Qatar. This was a great example of how the partnership between the clinical instructor and the student worked in enhancing formative assessment methods that resulted in better student outcomes.

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **223** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 —Shehnaaz Mohamed (faculty), assistant professor, University of Calgary-Qatar, and Jawaher Matiullah (student), 4<sup>th</sup>-year Bachelor of Nursing student, University of Calgary, Qatar, <u>shehnaaz.mohamed@ucalgary.ca</u>

Assessment is a conversation, a negotiation between student and teacher about ways of knowing, doing, and being, the result of which should set the student up for meaningful engagement with the material and a successful demonstration of understanding, application, and synthesis. It should be an ongoing and iterative process. It should account for who the student is and how they experience the world. But these statements, this constructivist view of learning, can be uncomfortable for educators. Constructing learning, and assessment of and for learning as an iterative process conavigated by student and teacher, means taking a more responsive and partnered approach to teaching and learning. At the outset, until it becomes a way of being and doing, the constructivist approach to learning and assessment can mean more work for the teacher. But isn't it worth it to make learning meaningful and engaging for all—teacher included?!

—Amanda Kelly Ferguson, post-doctoral fellow, student learning experiences, McCall MacBain post-doctoral fellow, teaching and leadership program, McMaster University, Canada, <u>fergua17@mcmaster.ca</u>

Formative assessment, as a pedagogical practice to understand and respond to students' feedback, is essential for instructors who strive to determine learning successes and barriers in their course. Conducting formative assessment through student-faculty partnership provides a structure with the potential to advance equity in the learning experience. Student partners offer many ways for instructors to gain meaningful feedback on their teaching. In turn, instructors discuss feedback and pedagogy to act on the students' needs in partnership. Co-creation through partnership as a pedagogical approach offers a collaborative space built on relationships and communication for students and instructors to close the assessment cycle together where results are translated into action for everyone to succeed. These thoughts are based on my experience leading the Students Assessing Teaching and Learning (SATAL) program, a student-faculty partnership program at a research-intensive minority-serving institution.

—Adriana Signorini, Administrator, University of California, Merced, USA, asignorini@ucmerced.edu

#### **CURRENT EXAMPLES**

In this section we include eight examples of students as partners in assessment work, all clearly grounded in explicit statements of definitions of assessment. Three examples at the Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **224** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1).* https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553

course level, one example at the program level, one example of a teaching and learning center initiative, one example at the systems level, and one example that looks across contexts from the perspective of a national association, offer to readers detailed examples of what is possible.

#### Enrolled student co-creation of assessment within a course

I understand assessment as a process of engaging students' language, agency, selfauthorship, and self-directed learning goals in dialogue with course learning goals. At a liberal arts college where I co-teach courses in education studies, enacting assessment as partnership work includes establishing dyads of students as learning partners in each course. In the mid-course assessment partners' conference, each student shares something they have learned from their partner, then what they are learning from the course. We ask how they are meeting their own standards for their work and how they know. Finally, we connect this both to our standards and to students' plans for the balance of the course. As a co-teacher, I get to listen and respond to students and colleagues as part of the work of assessment as we build a participant structure that uplevels what we can do together.

> —Alice Lesnick, academic staff/faculty, Bryn Mawr College, USA, alesnick@brynmawr.edu

Assessment in this context refers to how a learner's content knowledge, skills, and performance may be evaluated and graded as part of a course. Assessments should provide the learner with sufficient feedback to encourage growth and progress. As part of my 4<sup>th</sup>-year science communication seminar course, students exercise complete freedom over their final projects and select their own topic, audience, and medium. In previous years, final submissions have ranged from art installations to short documentaries to board games. To encourage students to take creative risks and direct their own learning, students and I co-create individualised rubrics for their unique deliverables. Students decide what success looks like to them and what skills and competencies they deem necessary in delivering an effective final project. Both students and I must justify our proposed grading criteria and reach consensus. Partnering with students on designing rubrics empowers them to direct their own learning, take risks, and helps me create tailored assessments for unique deliverables.

-Abeer Siddiqui, academic staff/faculty (science librarian), Faculty of Science, McMaster University, Canada, <u>siddia33@mcmaster.ca</u>

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#### Enrolled student contributions to course-level assessment criteria and outcomes

I teach a module about how children learn mathematics in elementary school. My university introduced "Live Briefs," in which an employer sets students a problem, which contributes towards the module assessment task. In my case, a local school asked students to plan activities and material to help parents learn about place value (the value of a numeral based on its position in a number). After hearing the Live Brief from the school, the students and I considered how the issue could be answered and identified the information to be shared with parents. Students worked in groups to answer the brief. For the assessed feedback session, students devised a range of resources to support parents including information sheets, PowerPoints to share in parent information sessions, home activities to complete with their children, and physical resources to use at home. By working in partnership with students on assessment, broader and more creative approaches were used.

> —John Parkin, academic staff/faculty, Anglia Ruskin University, UK, john.parkin@aru.ac.uk

We are tutors creating a new master's elective consisting of five sessions themed around different aspects of veterinary pharmacy. Students will co-create and contribute to assessment. Firstly, students will provide formative assessment on presentations made by their peers within each teaching session. Secondly, students will provide formative assessment on personal reflections written by their peers following each session. Reflections will discuss application of key lessons drawn by students from each theme to their own professional practice. Finally, students will collectively choose the topic of their summative assignment from a list of options and propose assessment criteria to be included in the rubric. Students will be awarded up to 10% of the total elective grade for their contribution to assessment. The involvement of students as partners in assessment is hoped to increase motivation, engagement and inclusivity; support students' internal feedback through comparisons with peers' work; and develop students' feedback literacy.

> -Martin Hawes and Sima Hassan, academic staff/faculty, Aston University, UK, <u>m.hawes@aston.ac.uk</u>

We can, and should, make more use of collaborative partnerships with students to improve teacher assessment literacy. As a lecturer on a compulsory Principles of Marketing module at King's College London, I play an important role in seeding 600 level-4 students' understanding of assessment criteria annually. Research advocates the benefits of students as partners in co-creating assessment criteria (Andrews et al., 2018; Meer & Chapman, 2014) to foster shared understanding of assessment expectations

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### Teaching and learning center initiative to create dialogue between students and instructors

Students often complete traditional, instructor-driven assignments, exams, etc., although the literature on learner-centered teaching encourages instructors to let go of some of their power and involve students in the assessment process (Weimer, 2013). Reimagining assessment through the lens of ungrading, an alternative method that puts more emphasis on student learning than on grades, we asked our student partners to share their experiences with assessments and the ways they would like to be more involved in the process. Whether co-creating assignment rubrics, choosing how they demonstrate their learning, or giving feedback to instructors on procedures, the students welcome more autonomy and hope that instructors will embrace more authentic and formative assessments. By amplifying student voices through the creation of on-demand resources, our work with student partners is intended to bring instructors and students into dialogue and empower students to actively engage in conversations on assessment.

—Jamie Kim and Suzanna Klaf, academic staff/faculty, Columbia University, USA, <u>jk3622@columbia.edu</u>; <u>sk4189@columbia.edu</u>

#### Institutional-level partnership with students in assessment

I work as the director of assessment at a mid-size, private university in the United States. In this context, assessment is most often conceptualized as the assessment of learning and development across and within complex systems such as degree programs, institutional core curricula, and multitiered co-curricular programs, among others. I am a white, male immigrant and, as such, partnership is often crucial in helping me develop a complete perspective in my work. Students-as-partners work in this version of assessment is unsurprisingly complex, but with that complexity comes expanded potential for the impact of such work. I have had the pleasure of partnering with

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **227** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 students to develop/revise/translate outcomes, map curricula, design assessments, analyze data, make interpretations, and apply interpretations to structure meaningful system changes. Unfortunately, partnership in this work is still quite rare. I continue to challenge all who engage in assessment at the systems level to partner with students! —Nicholas Curtis, academic staff/faculty, Marquette University, USA, nicholas.curtis@marquette.edu

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information about student learning undertaken for improvement but is also an exercise in evidentiary reasoning about what students know and can do from a collection of what students say, do, or make. I have seen a variety of students-as-partners examples during my time at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Students have been involved in data collection and analysis at a programmatic or institutional level to help unearth misplaced assumptions about the student experience and identify possible solutions to address learning gaps. Students have co-created learning outcome statements, led student <u>focus groups</u>, and undertaken <u>research projects</u>. They have identified evidence of their learning from outside of course experiences to document attainment of learning outcomes, designed assignments, and co-created rubrics. Engaging students promotes a democratic and equitable approach to assessment that ensures data collection, analysis, and actions align with students and their needs.

-Natasha Jankowski, academic staff/faculty, New England College, USA, <u>njankowski@nec.edu</u>

#### FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

All the contributions included thus far also could be examples of future possibilities, but in this section we include those contributions that focus on where people have plans to go and where people hope, aspire, or wish we could go. These contributions name what might hinder progress but also offer visions and encouragement for continued efforts.

Running a students-as-partners (SaP) programme in a selective and research-intensive institution has presented some context-based challenges. I have worked towards the idea that for real institutional commitment to engaging SaP, we should leave "no stone unturned" in areas we might adopt SaP. However, assessment (when undertaken for programme credit) has largely been avoided when it comes to student partnership. I think both staff and students bear equal reluctance to create a better assessment experience. Why? I don't have all the answers, but with a competitive process for entry based mainly on traditional exams, students feel comfortable in their "tried and tested" routes to success. Similarly, staff are reluctant to steer students into an uncomfortable space of being assessed in different ways, even when they are more authentic to a

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **228** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 discipline. But if we build a partnership approach, perhaps we could entice both staff and students to grasp this nettle!

-Mike Streule, academic staff/faculty, Imperial College, UK, m.streule@imperial.ac.uk

Assessment in health professions education (HPE) is a highly fraught term. Even when it is labelled as "formative," assessment is never neutral. Many medical learners describe assessment as nerve wracking, burdensome, and detrimental to their learning (Ott et al., 2022). It is therefore doubtful that assessment in HPE can ever truly exist as a partnership. But, as Watling and Ginsburg (2019) suggest, perhaps there can be "room in our curricula for zero-stakes moments of learning, discovery and experimentation" (p. 82). Might we strive to build a learning environment where learners and faculty who have built trusting relationships over time could have informal and undocumented "feedback conversations" instead of constantly being assessed? What about spaces where learners can fail safely, such as simulations or reflective sharing groups? While assessment in HPE may not ever reflect "true" partnership, these strategies can perhaps shift the conversation to more meaningfully incorporate some of partnership's core principles.

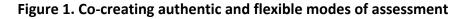
-Anita Acai, academic staff/faculty, McMaster University, Canada, acaia@mcmaster.ca

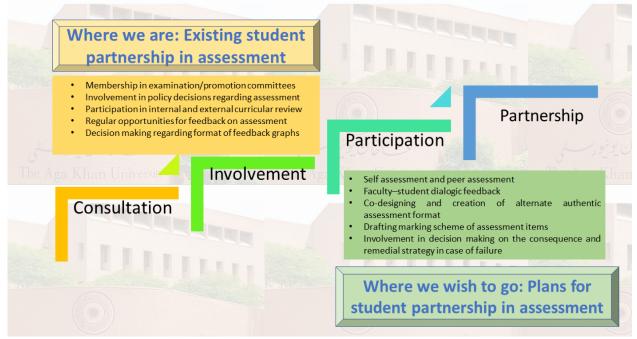
Why do universities continue to write assessment criteria in such an obscure way that they need decoding? Ask a lecturer that question and they may say the answer lies in academic regulations and quality assurance. But our policies, processes, and practice in higher education need to give our students the best chance of success. If they don't, then they need changing. Almost a third of students in the 2022 UK National Student Survey indicate that the assessment criteria used in the marking of their work is unclear. That is a strong message for the sector. Yet rather than take a system-wide approach, courses instead work in a piecemeal way supporting students to demystify the assessment criteria in their context. To ensure that assessment criteria are meaningful and accessible to students, it must be written WITH students, not just in a few innovative spaces at a university, but as a policy requirement.

-Karen Arm, academic staff/faculty, Southampton Solent, UK, <u>karen.arm@solent.ac.uk</u>

Assessments at Aga Khan University, Faculty of Health Sciences ensure institutional accountability to society to graduate safe doctors and nurses. Summative assessment approaches are currently multi-modal and ensure achievement of competence in various domains. Multiple formative assessments are conducted to support conceptual understanding and skill acquisition. Students' role in assessment is presently limited to consultation and involvement, with a few examples of active participation and decision making (Figure 1). To promote excellence in assessment and enhance student

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **229** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1)*. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 partnership, educational leaders and students at the institution reviewed and identified assessment domains where students could further collaborate. Plans are to start formative assessment activities ranging from self to peer assessment, faculty-student dialogic feedback, drafting assessment items, co-designing assessment rubrics, and co-creating authentic and flexible modes of assessment (Figure 1). This expansion of partnership with students will benefit learners with varying strengths and weaknesses using a framework that can be adopted widely in similar settings.





—Kauser Jabeen, <u>kausar.jabeen@aku.edu</u>, academic staff/faculty, Pakistan, codesigning and co-creation of formative assessments with faculty and students as partners, Kauser Jabeen, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aga Khan Medical College, Kulsoom Ghias, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aga Khan Medical College, Sadaf Khan, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aga Khan Medical College, Saniya Sabzwari, Faculty of Health Sciences, Aga Khan Medical College, Khairulnissa Ajani, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Nursing, Shanaz Cassum, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Nursing, Omar Mahmud, Medical Student, Aga Khan Medical College, all of Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan

# As someone who has been deeply immersed in assessment as a student, a teaching assistant, and now an instructor, I understand assessment as an opportunity to honour knowledge, experience, and engagement in a dynamic, mutual conversation between

Cook-Sather, A., Slates, S., Acai, A., Aquilina, S., Ajani, K., Arm, K., Besson, M., Brennan, J., Brockbank, M., Carter, **230** K., Cassum, S., Clampton, C., Crawford, R., Curtis, N., Dhanoa, J., Diez, P. A., Evans, G., Fleisig, R., Ferguson, A. K., Ghias, K., Gonsalves, C., Hassan, S., Hawes, M., Jabeen, K., Jankowski, N., Khan, S., Kim, J., Klaf, S., Lesnick, A., Mahmud, O., Matiullah, J., Medland, E., Merrony, I., Mohamed, S., Moisse, K., Noel, N., Paliktzoglou, V., Parkin, J., Perkins, J., Pryor, M., Sabzwari, S., Shamsheri, T., Siddiqui, A., Signorini, A., Streule, M., Turi, S., Wilkinson, W., Wilson, M., Wilson-Scott, J., & Winstone, N. (2023). "How can students-as-partners work inform assessment?". *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7(1).* https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i1.5553 educational shareholders. I think we should seek to disrupt linear, hierarchical relationships that separate teacher and student and knower and learner; rather, we need to create space for students to have their intimate knowledges honoured, uplifted, and brought into dialogue. When we do this, assessment can become a process of and for student learning.

-Maddie Brockbank, student, PhD candidate, Vanier Scholar, McMaster University, Canada, <u>brockbam@mcmaster.ca</u>

#### CONCLUSION

A growing number of publications focus on how students can be partners in assessment, and while our goal with Voices from the Field is not to analyze contributions in relation to this scholarship, we do want to reference it for those who want to join this conversation. Arenas in which academic staff/faculty, professional staff, and students have worked as partners in assessment include: student learning (Chase, 2020), expression (particularly writing) (Joseph et al., 2020), and grading (Deeley & Brown, 2014; Del Rosso & Nordstrom-Wehner, 2020; Meer & Chapman, 2014) within individual courses (El-Mowafy, 2014; Kearney, 2019) and particularly toward "assessment literacy" (Deeley & Bovill, 2017). They also include students-as-partners approaches in engaging in and analyzing feedback (Andrews et al., 2018; Matthews et al., 2023), including principles for engaging students as partners in assessment that emphasizes inclusivity (Bovill et al., 2021), assessment of faculty teaching (Cook-Sather, 2009; Cook-Sather et al., 2020), and program-level assessment (Curtis & Anderson, 2021a, 2021b). Including students as partners in assessment in all forms and at all levels is one of a growing number of broader arguments for equity and responsiveness in assessment (Cook-Sather, 2021; Inoue, 2015; Loglie, 2019; Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017, 2020).

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