



ESCalate Developing Pedagogy and Practice 2010/11 Grant Project Interim Report

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Project Title Assessment Reassessed: A student and lecturer collaborative enquiry

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Project Start date 1 March 2011

Project End date 31 December 2011

ESCalate interim report

1. Project overview

Project title	Assessment reassessed: A student and lecturer collaborative enquiry
Project lead	Dr Will Curtis Dr Jane McDonnell Dr Sam McGinty
Institution	De Montfort University
Reporting period	March 2011 – Sept 2011

Drawing on literature that addresses the value of collaborative research, our project develops a staff-student collaborative enquiry within the context of assessment feedback. In particular, we draw on the work of Michael Fielding and John Heron, who are at the forefront in advocating student-lecturer collaboration – Fielding with his notion of ‘students as researchers’ (Fielding & Bragg, 2003) and Heron with his work on ‘co-operative inquiry’ (Heron & Reason, 2006). Additionally, our project explores the potential for employing more collaborative assessment feedback strategies within higher education. Building on research that highlights the value of such work (Pryor & Crossouard, 2010; Webb, 2010), we understand collaborative assessment feedback to be a dynamic way of improving pedagogy, whilst also developing greater mutuality in staff-student relations.

Fielding, M and Bragg, S. (2003). *Students as Researchers: Making a difference. Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge: Pearson Publishing.

Heron, J. (1988) Assessment Revisited. In: Boud, D. (ed) *Developing student autonomy in learning*. 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page, pp. 76-90.

Pryor, J. & Crossouard, B. (2010) Challenging formative assessment: disciplinary spaces and identities, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35 (3), pp 265-276

Webb, M. (2010) Beginning teacher education and collaborative formative e-assessment, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35 (3), pp 597-618

2. Summary of aims and objectives:

Aims:

1. To engage students and lecturers in meaningful collaborative enquiry concerning the characteristics of effective assessment feedback practices
2. To stimulate discussion, reflection and action regarding assessment feedback between and within Education Studies subject areas at seven HEIs (including DMU).

Objectives:

1. To document and evaluate the implementation of a collaborative enquiry
2. To consider the potential for student and staff collaborative enquiry in both research and pedagogy
3. To examine the perceptions of students and lecturers concerning current assessment feedback practices

4. To facilitate structured conversations about the potential to develop more collaborative assessment feedback practices

3. Outline of progress to date against the project plan including specific activities undertaken:

	March 2011	April 2011	May 2011	June 2011	July 2011	Aug 2011
1. Research teams set up						
2. Research team discussions regarding collaborative working and collaborative assessment feedback						
3. Contacting partner universities who will participate in the research						
4. Reflections on the processes of collaborative working						
5. Initial empirical work at our own institution						
6. Analysis of initial findings						
7. Preparation of SRHE Annual Research Conference 2011 paper						
8. Preparation for student-lecturer conference on collaborative assessment feedback						

1. Research teams set up

Three research teams have been set-up. Each team consists of one lecturer and three Education Studies final year students. A competitive selection process was administered after consultation with students about the best way forward. This was due to high levels of student interest in the project. Each student submitted a short piece of writing (150-200 words) about collaborative assessment feedback or collaborative research. Following selection of the students who would co-participate in the project the teams were formed.

2. Research team discussions regarding collaborative working and collaborative assessment feedback

Each team met and discussed the project in more detail and started reviewing the literature in this area – with readings on collaborative assessment feedback and collaborative research practices being circulated and discussed in each team.

3. Contacting partner universities who will participate in the research

Each team made contact with our partner institutions and were warmly received – with each university being keen to participate in our project with their students and lecturers. However, due to the timing of the university year – many students were unable to participate due to exam preparation. Due to the strict cost implications of our visits to other universities we decided to postpone our visits until October – this will enable us to interview a wider range of students and lecturers. The benefits of this are likely to be a larger sample size contributing to the validity and reliability of

our findings, in addition to greater facilitation of discussions about collaborative assessment feedback practices. Please see section 5 for a discussion of the implications of the change of date for data collection.

4. Reflections on the processes of collaborative working

As part of the project focuses on the extent to which collaborative research practices can really exist between students and lecturers – the lecturers in each team have reflected on the tensions of the recruitment process of students onto the project. And considered the extent to which there would be a 'shift' from the lecturer as perceived lead of the team to each team member playing an 'equal' role. These reflections are anticipated to be pertinent for the writing of a methodology paper about collaborative research practices. We will also encourage students to reflect on their roles within their teams as part of this ongoing reflective practice.

5. Initial empirical work at our own institution

We had always anticipated using our own institution as part of the data collection process, particularly in a 'before' and 'after' context to build upon and consolidate the data from our partner institutions. As part of the 'before' process we collected data in relation to key themes for our ESCalate project – these were the concepts of democratic assessment and 'feedback- as – a- dialogue'. This work was conducted by one of the students taking part in the project and involved the facilitation of a focus group with first years on the degree. This was intended both as a way of gathering initial data about students' views on assessment feedback and as a way of beginning to engage in collaborative research.

6. Analysis of initial findings

The initial data were analysed to establish themes in the students' views of current feedback practices. Insights from the analysis of these findings have highlighted students' views on more collaborative feedback strategies. Among these were students' reluctance to adopt more experimental approaches and their understanding of feedback relations along the lines of expertise. They have also helped us consider the power dynamic within the assessment feedback process. Consequently this will shape our interview schedules with our project institutions in October.

7. Preparation of SRHE Annual Research Conference 2011 paper

Following a blind peer review our conference paper examining both our collaborative research practices and findings in regard to collaborative feedback practices has been accepted. The paper is titled 'Developing mutuality in research and practice: Reflections on a student-lecturer collaborative enquiry into assessment feedback.' This will give us the opportunity to present our paper and take questions.

8. Preparation for student-lecturer conference on collaborative assessment feedback

We have started to plan our conference: considering paper, workshop and poster themes, contacted potential key-note speakers and set up administrative procedures. We anticipate sending a callout for papers at the end of September (draft conference schedule attached). We anticipate the following conference fees:

- DMU staff and students = free
- Participating institutions – staff = £20 / students = free
- Non-participating institutions – staff = £80 / students = £10

4. Future stages/developments toward completion of the project

	Sept 2011	Oct 2011	Nov 2011	Dec 2011
Confirm research tools, interview schedules etc within individual teams				
Conference organisation				
Visit partner institutions to undertake collaborative enquiries				
Data analysis within teams				
Reflections on collaborative enquiry processes				
Teams meet to share findings and experiences with one another				
Student-lecturer collaborative feedback conference				
Preparation of BERA 2012 conference paper				
Complete project report for ESCalate				

5. Impacts on the original project plan, content and/or time-scale

Although aspects of the project have been slightly delayed (data collection at partner institutions) – other aspects of the project with later deadlines have been brought forward and progress has been made in these areas, for example: conference organisation and dissemination of the project. In addition to the funded outcomes of the project (up until December 2011), a range of other outcomes will go ahead as planned: Writing of papers (Dec 2011 – June 2012), workshop on collaborative assessment feedback (Feb 2012), workshop on collaborative research practices (March 2012), creation of staff and student guides for collaborative research (April 2012). We also intend to take students who took part in the project to the British Education Studies Association (BESA) annual conference in July – with support from DMU and by applying via the student bursary scheme they offer.

6. Summary of expenditure to date

Submitted to ESCalate

Democratic Learning Conversations

A two-part student and lecturer conference on collaborative enquiry and assessment feedback

16th December 2011 in Edith Murphy building, De Montfort University, Leicester

9.30 – Registration and coffees

10.00 – Introductions and notices (Will, Jane & Sam)

10.10 – Welcome (PVC Teaching and Learning – Andy Downton)

PART 1 – Collaborative Enquiry

10.30 – Collaborative enquiry from our ESCalate project (students & staff from project)

11.15 - Coffees

11.30 – Parallel discussion groups (facilitated by our ESCalate students + DMU TFs)
Potential topics:

- Voices
- Student perspectives
- Challenging traditional relations/expertise
- Opportunities for collaboration (research, seminars, evaluation, assessment...)
- Ensuring quality (Nick Allsopp?)

12.30 – Students as researchers (Michael Fielding / Mike Neary?)

1.15 – LUNCH – DMU student dissertation poster presentation - displayed in Hugh Aston lobby?)

PART 2 – Assessment Feedback

2.15 – Findings from our project (students and staff from project)

3.00 – Parallel sessions

Invited assessment feedback proposals from DMU staff and from students and staff at participating institutions. Sessions chaired by our students

3.30 – It's Good to Talk – NTFS Report (Alasdair Blair)

4.15 – Final thoughts / Plenary

4.30 – Close