Chat Transcript for Session Topic: Aligning assessment at the institutional level

Discussion of
McKitrick "Developing an assessment procedure to enhance student learning outcomes in critical thinking/information management"
Gray "United States Naval Academy Case Study: Using the Adoption of Innovation Literature to Guide Institutional Strategies for Assessment"

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Moderated by
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Date/Time	Author	Comment
29/05/2007 16:00:41	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Welcome everyone to this Session on 'Aligning assessment at the institutional level'. I'm Alison Muirhead from Inspire Research the conference organisers, and am your moderator for this chat session.
29/05/2007 16:00:49	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	If your login ID isn't immediately recognisable perhaps you could preface your first question by introducing yourself and your institution?
29/05/2007 16:00:59	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	I would like to introduce Dr. Steve Ehrmann from the TLT Group as the session's expert facilitator, and case study authors Sean McKitrick from Binghamton University and Peter Gray from the United States Naval Academy.
29/05/2007 16:01:09	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Steve is going to start with some comments and questions for Sean and Peter, so over to you Steve!
29/05/2007 16:01:20	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Thanks Alison! 1. Peter, I couldn't tell whether the effort in the first half of the decade at the Naval Academy was mainly to assess courses and programs on their own terms and/or whether the effort was focused on assessment of progress toward Academy a
29/05/2007 16:02:32	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Peter, are you there? or are you just typing a very long reply ;-)
29/05/2007 16:02:57	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	While Peter is typing, I'll let Sean start typing, too. Sean, you wrote about the initial bumps and starts, "Initial meetings by assessment staff with faculty and staff members evidenced some confusion about what role assessment would play in the tenure
29/05/2007 16:03:00	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	The primary focus was the assessment of courses and programs on their own term although the course and program outcomes were based on the institution wide goals set in 1999. We did this to keep the process close to home to start.
29/05/2007 16:03:31	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Peter, do you have any sense of whether the effort is leading toward progress on any of those goals, course level or Academy level?
29/05/2007 16:04:10	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	The faculty were very suspicious at first, mainly because both the state and federal govts wanted to mandate assessment in different forms; thankfully, we had the support of faculty senate leaders in defining our own portfolio-based assessment strategy

29/05/2007 16:05:06	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Sean, can you tell us a bit more about how that confusion was resolved? What role IS assessment playing in tenure and promotion, etc.?
29/05/2007 16:05:10	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	The faculty senate enumerated a number of things that they wanted to see, all the while making a policy prounouncement that results were to be discussed by them, not solely by administrators, before reports went to the state govt
29/05/2007 16:05:59	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Sean - How did you get buy in from faculty senate leaders?
29/05/2007 16:06:18	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	We had to make it clear from the start that assessment was NOT to play a part in the tenure and promotion process (I was not here for the entire time this hhapened), but it continues to be a concern despite our statements that it does not play a part
29/05/2007 16:06:30	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	However, the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee has for the last four years been developing and implementing assessment of three of the Academy-wide goals, namely, critial thinkg, effective communication, and geo-political understanding. These efforts ar
29/05/2007 16:06:31	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Those are my opening questions. I invite other participants in this session to add their questions and comments.
29/05/2007 16:06:36	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	A point of clarification. Do your interventions involve assessing students skills and qualities independent of the discipline - ie not embedded in disciplinary tasks?
29/05/2007 16:06:57	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	We had a number of faculty senate leaders who understood the need for assessment, at least from a political point of view--and thus they
29/05/2007 16:07:09	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	saw a bit of the writing on the wall
29/05/2007 16:07:13	**Terri Rees** (trees)	What would be the English equivalent to faculty Senate leaders?
29/05/2007 16:07:54	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Indeed, is there one?
29/05/2007 16:07:58	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	good question trees - I'm not sure?
29/05/2007 16:08:13	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	David--the issue for us has been primarily programmatic and general education assessment, although thankfully several faculty members have seen the importance of formative and embedded assessment--this is going to be an issue, however
29/05/2007 16:08:21	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Perhaps the Higher Education Academy?
29/05/2007 16:08:30	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Good question--what is the Eng equivalent?
29/05/2007 16:09:05	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Sean, why don't you describe briefly what the Faculty Senate is at your institution.
29/05/2007 16:09:32	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Peter, you could do the same.
29/05/2007 16:09:32	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	The idea of assessing general skills and attributes separately from the discipline is not a pattern in uk higher education so how does this work? what methods are used?
29/05/2007 16:09:41	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Our Faculty Senate Assessment Committee members who represent each of our four academic division is part of an elected body of senators.
29/05/2007 16:09:54	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	The Faculty Senate provides oversight, most notably over academic affairs, with regard to curriclum, budgeting, assessment, and procedures

29/05/2007 16:10:05	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	ours are elected as well
29/05/2007 16:10:23	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Elected from within the institution?
29/05/2007 16:10:32	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	for us, yes
29/05/2007 16:10:38	**Terri Rees** (trees)	ok, thanks
29/05/2007 16:11:01	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	OK, do any of the UK institutions have an equivalent board?
29/05/2007 16:11:04	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Peter and Sean, in responding to David's question, it would be helpful to clarify what you each mean by the term "discipline."
29/05/2007 16:11:28	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Annual assessment reports from each academic department are submitted to the committee. We then provide an annual summary on the Status of Assessment at USNA to the Senate.
29/05/2007 16:11:35	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	by discipline, I mean program--for example, political science, chemistry, etc.
29/05/2007 16:11:43	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Not really, no. We have teaching and Learning committee at institutional level
29/05/2007 16:11:44	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	should we assess critical thinking in this way in the UK?
29/05/2007 16:11:49	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	USNA - United States Naval Academy
29/05/2007 16:12:20	**Terri Rees** (trees)	In the UK, isn't it covered largely by the QAA benchmarks?
29/05/2007 16:12:32	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	QAA?
29/05/2007 16:12:41	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	To be honest, I think we have taken a "soft" approach to assessing critical thinking--a discourse oriented method (Delphi)--using standardized tests right now would be a serious blunder for us
29/05/2007 16:12:45	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	oh dear I think we need a glossary ;-)
29/05/2007 16:12:48	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Quality Assurance people
29/05/2007 16:13:01	**Terri Rees** (trees)	forgotten the whole title
29/05/2007 16:13:15	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Quality Assurance Agency for the HE sector
29/05/2007 16:13:16	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	a discourse oriented method?
29/05/2007 16:13:20	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Sean, please explain a bit more about why it would be a blunder to assess critical thinking with a standardized test
29/05/2007 16:14:02	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	A method based on gathering an initial round of comments about strengths and weaknesses regarding student performance, and then, in a second round, asking the respondents to rate their degree of agreement with one another's statements
29/05/2007 16:14:09	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	We have encouraged each department to include critical thinking their learning outcomes and to provide information as part of their assessment process. This is augmented by the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal that is administered to all freshmen

29/05/2007 16:15:04	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	do others think this would work in the uk?
29/05/2007 16:15:14	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Peter, when you say "compatible" do you mean that the two methods produce findings that are similar? or do you mean something else?
29/05/2007 16:15:40	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Regarding why this would be a serious blunder--faculty are very concerned that a standardized test (or at least the questions) would not reflect the learning standards for general education, and are really an attempt to "end run" across faculty
29/05/2007 16:15:40	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	good question steve
29/05/2007 16:15:49	**Carl Beckford** (CarlBeckford)	Sean, in addition to sehrmann's question, are your comments also true of online learning courses, or maybe just generally if these assessments should hold true for courses offered primarily or only online
29/05/2007 16:16:36	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think that Seans scenario would work well in the UK once we had worked it out to fit our system
29/05/2007 16:16:41	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	I mean that the WGCT Appaisal gives us info on skills that is standardized and the the department assessment gives us info on these abilities within the unique context of the field of study.
29/05/2007 16:17:07	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Carl--good question! We are currently beginning discussions with our online groups on both formative and summative assessment issues; however, they are so small right now (we have no online programs), that we would need to focus on course-based assessment
29/05/2007 16:17:22	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	What is the WGCT Appraisal?
29/05/2007 16:17:56	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	So Sean do you see this approach being rolled out to areas other then critical thinking?
29/05/2007 16:18:17	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	i like the idea of skills required by all students like the ability to create criteria for an assessment task and to be able to self assess against these criteria but would this work under your schemes?
29/05/2007 16:18:44	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	yes--we especially like the idea of rolling this approach out to interdisciplinary program, especially because these programs usually do not "control" content based courses since they come from different departments
29/05/2007 16:18:59	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Peter's comments point to a subject of debate in the US. A traditional view is that so-called "general education" courses are responsible for fostering learning outcomes common to all degrees (e.g., critical thinking, academic writing skills) wh
29/05/2007 16:19:12	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal is a test that covers the following skills: inference, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, and evaluation of arguments. Student read scenarios and then answer a series of questions.
29/05/2007 16:19:20	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think it would, and in some sense, the benchmarks include some of this. When they are ever revised, I'm not sure
29/05/2007 16:20:13	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Thanks Steve, that's useful info
29/05/2007 16:20:48	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	So far, we have pointed to standardized tests, to tests/projects within courses, and to Delphi studies of faculty as sources of assessment and evaluation information. What other sources are in use?
29/05/2007 16:21:45	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Has anyone else had experience of trying to implement assessment at the institutional level? What approaches have been taken in other countries?
29/05/2007 16:21:51	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	We are using surveys and focus groups of our "employers" offices in the Navy who supervise our graduates.

29/05/2007 16:21:55	Sean McKitrick (SeanMcKitrick)	We are beginning to use internship surveys--where internship hosts evaluate students on some general education skills so we can get an "external look" at thos well students are doing
29/05/2007 16:22:19	cynthia shedd (cindyshedd)	We survey internship sponsors, too.
29/05/2007 16:22:41	Alison Muirhead (AlisonMuirhead)	Have you found that a useful approach Cindy?
29/05/2007 16:22:45	Sean McKitrick (SeanMcKitrick)	Cindy and Peter--do you find that they are overly positive?
29/05/2007 16:22:52	Stephen Ehrmann (sehrmann)	Sean, your paper specifically mentions portfolios but then says that portfolios are not being used to assess critical thinking. (At least that's what I recall.) Am I remember correctly? Why not use portfolios for this purpose?
29/05/2007 16:22:57	cynthia shedd (cindyshedd)	Definitely
29/05/2007 16:22:58	Terri Rees (trees)	I am currently involved in a review of assessment across our institution, which has incorporated focus group interviews with staff as well as a student survey
29/05/2007 16:23:43	Alison Muirhead (AlisonMuirhead)	Is that process working well trees?
29/05/2007 16:23:59	Terri Rees (trees)	Workload appears to be an issue here and focus group attendance seems to reflect this
29/05/2007 16:24:10	Sean McKitrick (SeanMcKitrick)	Sehrmann--we use portfolios to assess different subject areas that are assumed to be distinct from one another--for example aesthetics and composition. We assume critical thinking to be infused within all courses, making it difficult to rely on one portfo
29/05/2007 16:24:26	Peter Gray (pgray)	We seem to get consistent positives and nagatives from a wide spectrum of respondents. I real problem is that the feedback is often not specific enough. That's our challenge1
29/05/2007 16:24:52	Terri Rees (trees)	So far, I feel the data is showing that staff, due to high workloads, take pragmatic approaches to assessment
29/05/2007 16:24:54	cynthia shedd (cindyshedd)	We are not always sure how the sponsors define the rating terms.
29/05/2007 16:25:14	Alison Muirhead (AlisonMuirhead)	trees - Eric Soulsby posted in the forum that he has found that getting "instructors involved in assessment-related activity is something we are trying to do and it has been problematic without providing some incentive in some manner" – do you think that
29/05/2007 16:25:28	Sean McKitrick (SeanMcKitrick)	Still--we have begun collecting upper division composition student writing samples, and then using a new york state (SUNY) developed rubric to evaluation criticla thinking
29/05/2007 16:25:28	Peter Gray (pgray)	We have a common critical thinking rubric that we suggest to department. This provides as least a basis for comparisons.
29/05/2007 16:25:37	Terri Rees (trees)	These pragmatic approaches may not however, be the best for students, in my opinion
29/05/2007 16:25:46	Carl Beckford (CarlBeckford)	Sean, your title also suggests Information Management. Do you see this as similar, same or directly related to critical thinking.
29/05/2007 16:25:56	Sean McKitrick (SeanMcKitrick)	Peter--we are starting to do this; have you been successful in getting them to use this?
29/05/2007 16:25:57	Stephen Ehrmann (sehrmann)	How's that common rubric working so far, Peter? or is it too early to tell?
29/05/2007 16:26:18	David Nicol (DavidNicol)	I have been trying to get agreement on some basic assessment principles in my university but they have to be flexibile enough to be applicable to different disciplines. However it does help to define why we are assessing which is not just to grade.
29/05/2007 16:26:39	Terri Rees (trees)	Yes, I think staff feel they may have more work imposed on them, as opposed to us using their input to make things better all round

29/05/2007 16:26:48	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Carl--we see it as related. Our SUNY-defined infromation management outcomes have to do with basic computer skills, but also with students' using information; perhaps a better term should be "information literacy"
29/05/2007 16:27:23	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	It works well for communication, but is not necessarily for statisics summaries (i.e., qualtiative rather than quantitative comparisons).
29/05/2007 16:27:27	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	David, that point also relates to another basic issue: is assessment clearly in the interests of the student (providing guidance that can lead relatively directly to improved learning)? Is it, in other words, part of teaching? Depends on how it's defined
29/05/2007 16:27:30	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	incentives for us are difficult for budgetary reasons
29/05/2007 16:28:15	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	I think incentives are counterproductive because they reinforce the idea that it is an add-on rather than part of teaching.
29/05/2007 16:28:19	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	So how can you get staff involved (in the wider institution)
29/05/2007 16:28:20	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	We have more success with the "soft sell"--in working with a core group of faculty who truly believe that assessment enhances student learning, and then hoping this core expands
29/05/2007 16:29:01	**Terri Rees** (trees)	The incentive could be about making things better/easier for staff. My experience shows that it is crucial to communicate this effectively though
29/05/2007 16:29:22	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	sehrmann, should we withold guidance? maybe at point of final testing but...
29/05/2007 16:29:39	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	A number of faculty (most) are very aware of what is going on with the Spellings Commission (federal pressure to assess), and most are concerned that if we do not do something now, then it will be mandated through standardized tests
29/05/2007 16:29:40	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	I agree with Cindy, so Alison's question is very much to the point. One way is to help instructors see that part of what they already do is "assessment," and that they can do it better. Another is to keep wafting 'low threshold' ideas for improv
29/05/2007 16:30:00	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	David, could you expand your question about guidance? I don't follow.
29/05/2007 16:30:01	**Terri Rees** (trees)	good point cindy, but follow up work could ensure that it isn't
29/05/2007 16:30:12	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Because of our bottom up approach to developing course and program learning outcomes as well as locally relevant assessment plan and our top down approach of requring annual assessment report we seem to have struck a good balance.
29/05/2007 16:30:22	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	I would be dishonest if I were to say this works in a majority of cases, but this gives us an opportunity to work together because we all agree on this point
29/05/2007 16:30:50	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	maybe misunderstood your point so just agreeing that assessment is supportive of learning
29/05/2007 16:30:58	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	I agree with Peter--despite pressure "from above," without a bottom-up strategy, we are lost
29/05/2007 16:31:52	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	It's important to provide 'existence proofs' that better assessment can help instructors better see what they're doing, like taking off a blindfold.
29/05/2007 16:31:54	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	To all: do faculty see assessment as learning?
29/05/2007 16:31:56	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	sean we have come from same two directions bottom up first to make innovations and now senior managers agree we should think strategically

29/05/2007 16:31:58	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	I think something that really annoys faculty is when we go to the trouble of collecting assessment data and never engender conversations about how students are doing and what we are doing about it
29/05/2007 16:32:05	**Terri Rees** (trees)	yews, impositions rarely work well in my experience. What is needed is a meeting point in the middle
29/05/2007 16:32:51	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	What we have found is that when faculty have actual student outcomes to discuss that they get very excited!
29/05/2007 16:32:54	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Sean, I agree. Our society of surveys, tests, etc. seems bent on convincing all instructors and students that the typical assessment is, at best, benefiting the person doing the testing, not the person being tested.
29/05/2007 16:33:01	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Cindy--in my experience, no. But many know they want to be agents in determining what assessments have to say about learning, and what to do about and discovered weaknesses
29/05/2007 16:33:37	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Cases I've seen hint that it takes years - four at least, probably much more, for wider acceptance of the view that collecting evidence can improve results, save time, reduce risk, etc.
29/05/2007 16:33:42	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	Sean, a lot of the concern here seems to be about being held accountable.
29/05/2007 16:33:52	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Sehrmann--it does drive me nuts to see lots of testing orgs and companies claiming or insinuating that we just need to collect data; that is really not assessment
29/05/2007 16:34:34	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Sean and Peter, what painful lessons have you learned about engaging instructors? What mistakes would you suggest that people in this session NOT repeat?
29/05/2007 16:34:52	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Cindy--agreed. Accountability is a word I rarely use here; still, some faculty react well when we discuss ways they can move the process forward, not SUNY, administration, or the govt
29/05/2007 16:34:54	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think that the key lies in our training of new staff and providing a broad view of the value of assessment
29/05/2007 16:35:46	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	A painful lesson I have learned is not to go into the process expecting things to change overnight, or trying to move forward too quickly. This usually results, at least in my experience, with a good deal of pushback
29/05/2007 16:35:53	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	We encourage faculty to share the learning outcomes for their courses with their students and to then use these to guide student and course evaluations.
29/05/2007 16:36:26	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	What resources do you provide (if any) to help with writing outcomes?
29/05/2007 16:36:33	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Peter, any advice for folks that begins, "Don't do what we did at first..."?
29/05/2007 16:36:58	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	We have a series of workshops that go from introductory to advanced every year!
29/05/2007 16:37:00	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Another lesson is not to give the impression that we are just collecting data. Feedback is really important; and encouraging conversation is also vital--as long as that conversation leads to some kind of action
29/05/2007 16:37:08	**Terri Rees** (trees)	We provide a good session for new staff on writing outcomes.
29/05/2007 16:37:12	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	to what extent arTo what extent are students involved as partners in assessment processes in your institutions?
29/05/2007 16:37:41	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	David--not much for us right now. We'd love to get there, though
29/05/2007 16:37:54	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	We also have a group of "local experts" who can act as role models for their disciplines. Many are part of the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee.

29/05/2007 16:37:55	**Carl Beckford** (CarlBeckford)	Sean, we are trying to enhance student learning. To All, do you believe we have a fairly good set of assessment tools that judges when learning has taken place (or is this is tied up in this study)?
29/05/2007 16:38:17	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	David, I've seen students engaged as assessment partners occasionally. I think it's a powerful technique.
29/05/2007 16:38:28	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	are you at the stage of seeing any impact on student learning outcomes from your cases?
29/05/2007 16:39:13	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	Involving students would seem to fit well with the development of the learning organistion that you are all seeking.
29/05/2007 16:39:16	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think some faculties are becoming more enlightened in this area, but it is slow going. Workload is used as a reason for not being creative with assessment generally
29/05/2007 16:39:20	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Cindy, re writing outcomes - you might want to look at this web site. It deals with some emerging new kinds of outcomes in the area of writing. http://www.tltgroup.org/resourc
29/05/2007 16:39:22	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	have you used that approach steve or david (students as partners in assessment)
29/05/2007 16:39:24	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Alison--I'd enjoy learning more about how to measure impact. We have seen, through anecdotal evidence, students tending to learn more because faculty have learned to address issues as addressed by assessments
29/05/2007 16:39:26	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Also, we regularly have assessment town meetings, colloquia, and poster sessions, that bring the whole campus together. These are typically attended by 100 or more people.
29/05/2007 16:40:24	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Peter, do you find this has raised the profile of assessment within the institution?
29/05/2007 16:40:48	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Sehrmann--I agree--workload is often used--when I say, "to begin, why don't you assemble a group of faculty who have just graded dissertations and discuss strengths and weaknesses," so many will say--that will take too long
29/05/2007 16:41:00	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	yes, we are involving students in the development of our assessment policy. In all our study we are involving students as assessors of thier own learning through self-assessment, peer assessment etc
29/05/2007 16:41:21	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Alison, here's one example (in the first item on this page, about the textbook written by students). The students wrote test questions as well, and the i nstructors were very pleased with the quality of the items. 29/05/2007 16:42:03
29/05/2007 16:42:10	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Thanks Steve!
29/05/2007 16:42:45	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	there are some good papers on students creating their own mulltiple choice tests including the wrong and right answers. This turns normal use of this test into a powerful process for learning.
29/05/2007 16:42:47	**Terri Rees** (trees)	That is to say, that they can deciide
29/05/2007 16:43:07	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Sean, I understand about workload. The issue of money is exactly analogous. It wasn't many years ago that institutions would say, We can't afford $5K for a learning management system. But many now spend 100s of thousands on them. The question is, "
29/05/2007 16:43:17	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Yes, I have student write the test items from the first exam in my research methods class and then use the items they generate as the "study guide."
29/05/2007 16:44:02	**Terri Rees** (trees)	How do you ensure they have the skills to be able to do that?

29/05/2007 16:44:12	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Another way to engage students as partners is to design the assessment so that they are the clients: the information is gathered and analyzed in ways that help them see how to improve their own learning (not just where to improve it, but how to improve it
29/05/2007 16:44:20	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	In the PRS chat earlier, that approach was taken (students writing questions). Do you find Peter that they generate items in the area they don't understand as well?
29/05/2007 16:44:31	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	hence they formulate the question, think about variants for the answer, provide feedback on right and wrong answers - all of which develops their thinking more than taking the test
29/05/2007 16:44:45	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	Some faculty develop rubrics with their students.
29/05/2007 16:45:40	**Terri Rees** (trees)	can you elaborate Steve?
29/05/2007 16:45:55	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Trees, in the example I just posted, the students first researched and wrote a short textbook chapter and then wrote test items for that chapter. Three students were competing to be the author of each section, and their work was being evaluated by the ins
29/05/2007 16:46:28	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	do you have a reference for that steve
29/05/2007 16:46:31	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Sounds good.
29/05/2007 16:47:01	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	There were 225 students in the course, with three students competing to write each of the 75 sections of the text. THey did all this in the first month or so of the term. Then they studied the text for the remainder of the term.
29/05/2007 16:47:15	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	I think that it is a combination of getting people to understand that assessment is of great value to their teaching and providing funds for such activities as summer stipends to analyze and interpret data and support for conference attendance.
29/05/2007 16:47:18	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	http://www.tltgroup.org/resources/gx/DWAC/Collab.htm - It's the first case, from Old Dominion University in Virginia
29/05/2007 16:48:15	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	That sounds like it might be difficult from the lecturers point of view Steve? A lot to co-ordinate!
29/05/2007 16:48:58	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Peter--I agree; lots of incentives along with a recognition of value; getting the funds for this can be difficult, however.
29/05/2007 16:49:01	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	The students were organized in sections of about 30, most face to face and a few sections online. The instructors had some grant money to work together in teh summer to plan the course.
29/05/2007 16:49:12	**Carl Beckford** (CarlBeckford)	Yes Alison, but great assessments always require great work from the lecturer
29/05/2007 16:49:29	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	True Carl :-)
29/05/2007 16:49:35	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	This question is for everyone: suppose all external pressures for assessment were now removed after 2007. Would assessment continue to grow and develop at your institution? Have there been enough individual and programmatic success stories that the move
29/05/2007 16:50:03	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	well there is a cost to change to great assessments but when they become routine they don't always cost more
29/05/2007 16:50:55	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	Steve, I think it would continue here in places, but growth overall would be slowed.
29/05/2007 16:51:07	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think so. There is so much competition for students that our institution would be keen to be seen as one of the best/most effective in turning out top graduates and postgrads

29/05/2007 16:51:13	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Maybe. There are some programs, such as our social work and master's of public administration program, that really have seen the benefits of assessment. It depends on subject areas--I think most of my liberal arts faculty would, given this scenario, bolt.
29/05/2007 16:51:48	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	I also think some of this is generational. Our younger professors might see the benefit of assessment
29/05/2007 16:52:08	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	In what sense is it generational, Sean?
29/05/2007 16:52:26	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Is it seeing the benefit of assessment that is missing or is it a reluctance to change tried-and-tested approaches?
29/05/2007 16:52:33	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	I believe that proof of concept of great assessments would change hearts and minds - the proof of learning gains is so far meagre.
29/05/2007 16:52:46	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I think the latter Alison
29/05/2007 16:52:59	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Many of our tenured faculty often state that when they began teaching, there was no pressure to assess; many of my younger faculty wonder why we have not been assessing all along
29/05/2007 16:53:35	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	as if assessment was actually valid or reliable!
29/05/2007 16:53:36	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	David--I agree. If we can empirically demonstrate this, many faculty would become "converted"
29/05/2007 16:53:39	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	For us, it is more about whether the person works from a faculty-centered model or a learner-centered one.
29/05/2007 16:54:01	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	And since the older model is faculty-centered...
29/05/2007 16:54:05	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	absolutely cindyshedd
29/05/2007 16:54:11	**Terri Rees** (trees)	We asked a question: why do we use exams at stage one and the major response was that it was administratively easier/quicker for academic staff, particularly for those with large student cohorts
29/05/2007 16:54:26	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Unfortunately, it seems to me that all assessment likes all politics is local. Therefore, even with extenal pressure assessment is only successful to the extent that there is local leadership at all levels of an institution.
29/05/2007 16:54:44	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	In physics, the Force Concept Inventory has had some real influence. The FCI combines several unusual attributes: a) if you're a physicist, you understand it and think it's legimate, b) when you use it, you're likely to find that a surprising # of your st
29/05/2007 16:54:55	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Peter--my sentiment exactly
29/05/2007 16:55:23	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	We are almost at the end of our scheduled session, are there any closing questions?
29/05/2007 16:55:30	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	We've got 5 minutes left in the session. Burning questions? Closing remarks?
29/05/2007 16:55:58	**Terri Rees** (trees)	I have no questions, but would like to say that this has been the most stimulating discussion of my day today
29/05/2007 16:56:03	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	It's my impression that assessment is most successful when tied to an institutional quest for excellence. What do you think?
29/05/2007 16:56:12	**Terri Rees** (trees)	agree
29/05/2007 16:56:32	**radu catalin** (karadu)	agree
29/05/2007 16:56:34	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	Cindy--yes, as well as faculty quest for excellent--when both exist, assessment can have very powerful effects

29/05/2007 16:56:48	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	but what mazur showed with the FCI was that students improved tho group learning involving dialogue where they took some ownership for learning
29/05/2007 16:57:24	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	and student quest for excellence
29/05/2007 16:57:27	**Terri Rees** (trees)	the quest for excellence can incorporate that
29/05/2007 16:57:33	**Carl Beckford** (CarlBeckford)	Not burning but...Sean, we are trying to enhance student learning. To All, do you believe we have a fairly good set of assessment tools that judges when learning has taken place (or is this is tied up in this study)?
29/05/2007 16:57:40	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	That's the key owership throughout the institution so that assessment becomes part of the culture.
29/05/2007 16:57:44	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Cindy, it's my impression that there are several flavors of 'assessment' that need to reinforce one another, including a) activities and outcomes of learning, b) use of evidence to improve the functioning of the institution. It's hard to build a culture
29/05/2007 16:58:17	**Peter Gray** (pgray)	Any suggestions on how we might follow up on this session and keep the conversation going?.
29/05/2007 16:58:20	**cynthia shedd** (cindyshedd)	Good point.
29/05/2007 16:58:23	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	Carl, I think our assessent tools and procedures are very, very primitive for the most part.
29/05/2007 16:58:44	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Prhaps we could start an online discussion list?
29/05/2007 16:58:49	**David Nicol** (DavidNicol)	pgray, it moves to discussion forum now
29/05/2007 16:58:51	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Please continue your discussions or post any unanswered questions in the conference discussion boards.
29/05/2007 16:58:51	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	To continue this discussion during the conference, we can use the discussion board.
29/05/2007 16:59:09	**Sean McKitrick** (SeanMcKitrick)	It would be great to have a working group on institutional strategies and ways to empirically demonstrate the assessment affects learning
29/05/2007 16:59:14	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	There will also be a chat transcript, so you can remind yourselves of what was discussed
29/05/2007 16:59:24	**Terri Rees** (trees)	Thanks all
29/05/2007 16:59:33	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	Perhaps that could be set up as and outcome of the conference?
29/05/2007 16:59:39	**Stephen Ehrmann** (sehrmann)	If anyone wants to reach me, I'm Steve Ehrmann and my e-mail is ehrmann@tltgroup.org
29/05/2007 16:59:40	**radu catalin** (karadu)	thanks
29/05/2007 16:59:45	**Alison Muirhead** (AlisonMuirhead)	I would like close this session by saying thank you to our facilitator Steve and authors Sean and Peter.

- TRANSCRIPT ENDS -

We apologise that owing to the limit on storage of individual messages within the chat software, particularly long messages have been truncated. Unfortunately, we are not able to recover these.