Reimagining assessment, reshaping futures: how might our assessment and feedback designs support learning for the longer term?

University of Gloucester

Online Festival of Learning

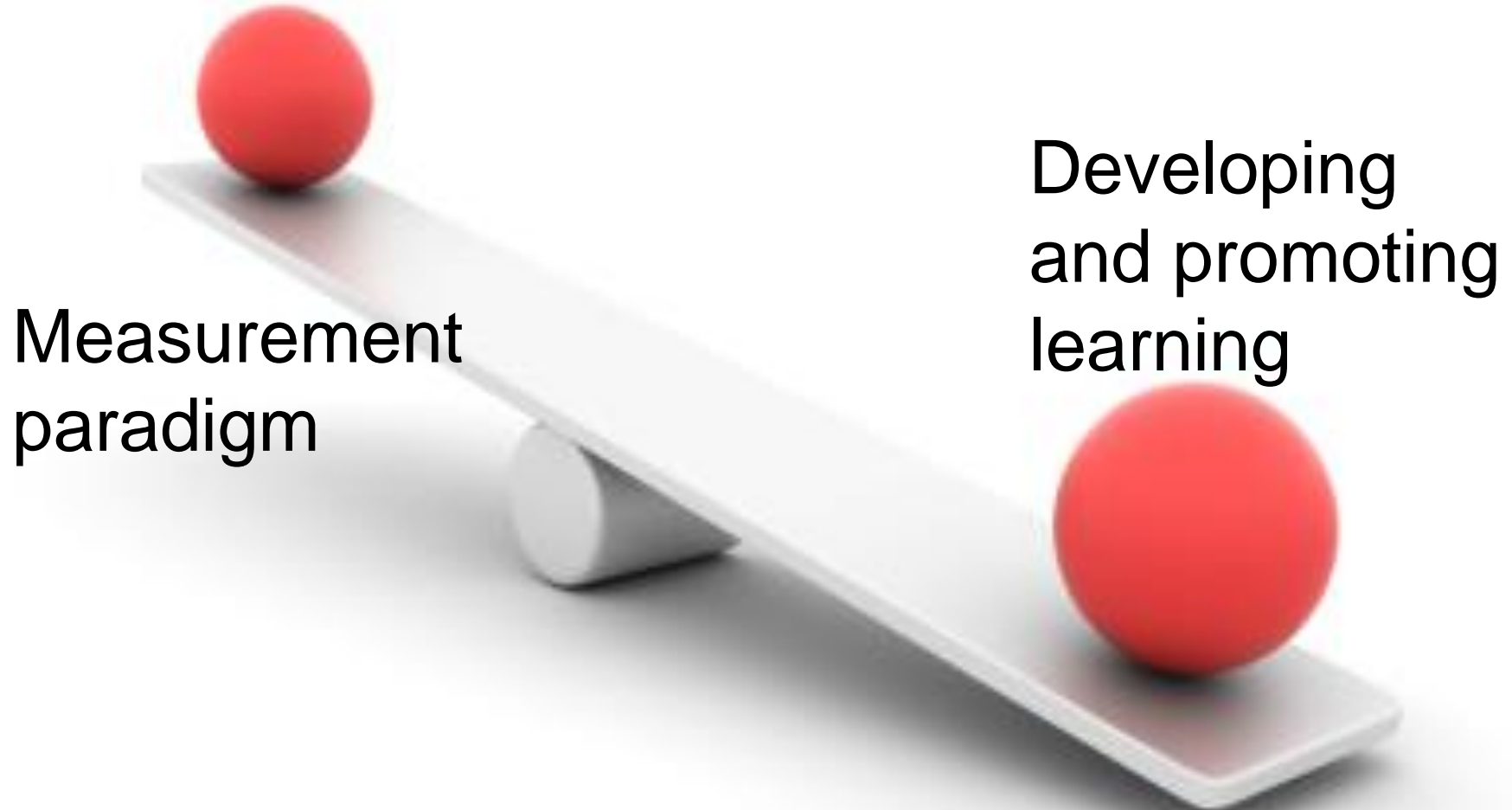Reimagining Higher Education, Reshaping Futures

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Assessment for Learning: rethinking assessment to ensure we strike a better balance

Measurement paradigm

Developing and promoting learning
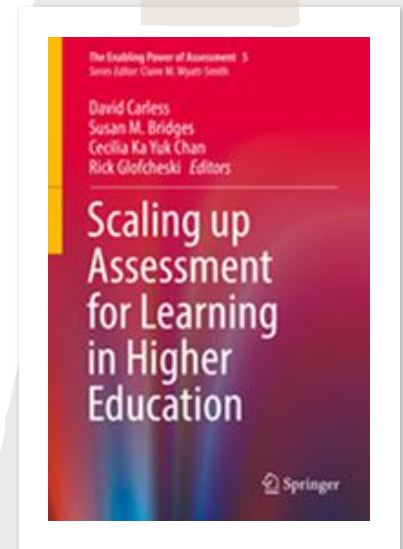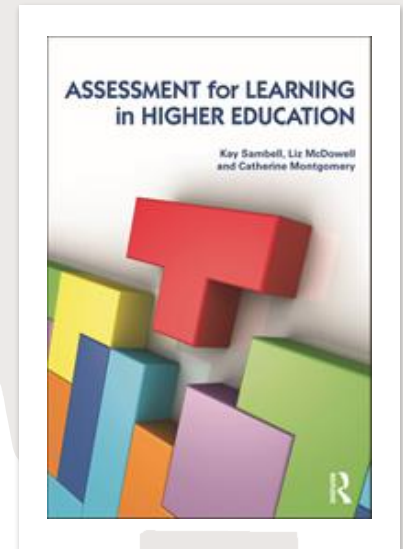
What is Assessment for Learning?

Assessment tasks are fit for purpose and align with important learning outcomes;
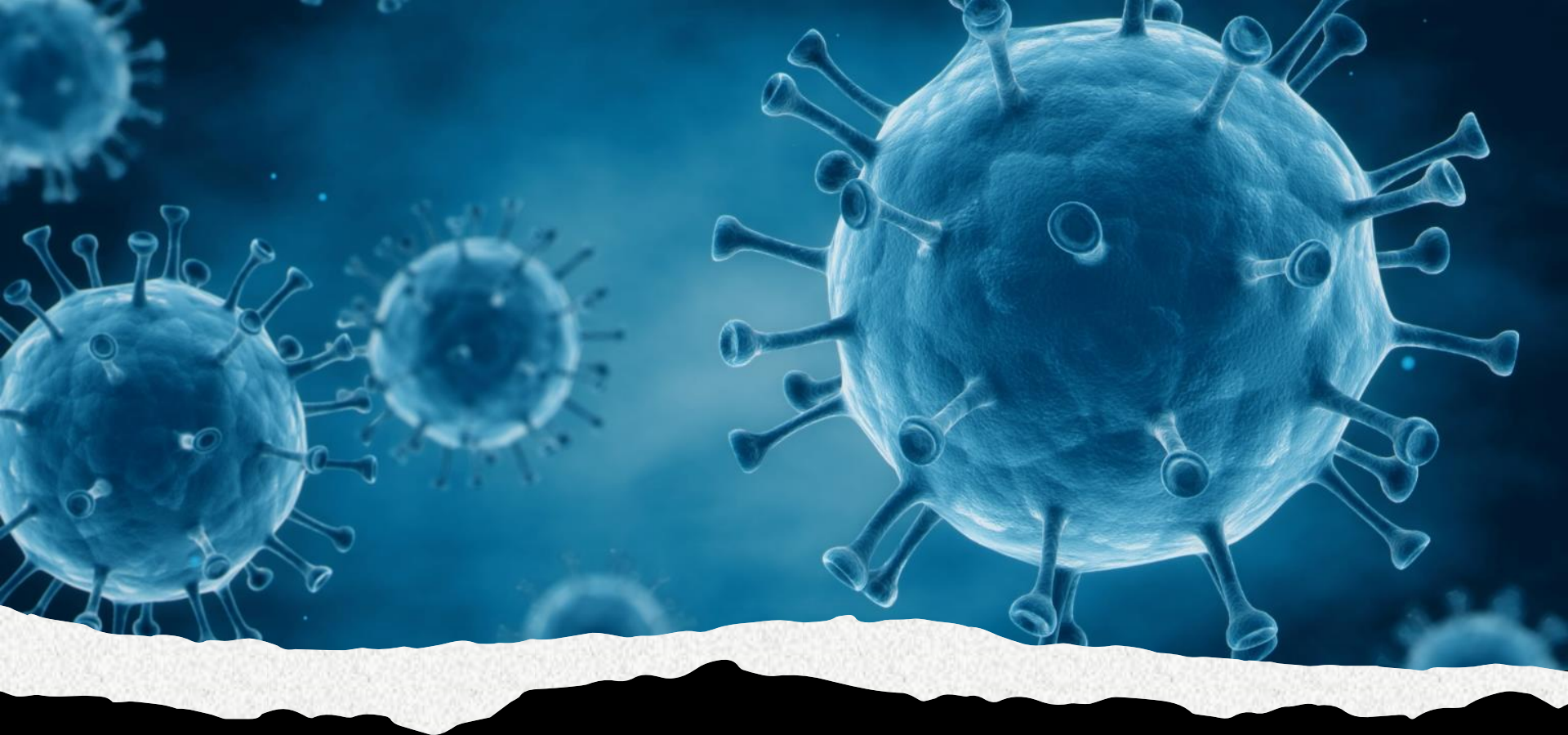
Assessment tasks are authentic; worthwhile, relevant to the longer-term, and offering students some level of control over their work;

Assessment tasks are challenging, demanding higher order learning and integration of knowledge learned in both the university and other contexts;

Assessment tasks involve the active engagement of students developing the capacity to find things out for themselves and learn independently;

Assessment expectations are made visible to students as far as possible;

ASSESSMENT for LEARNING in HIGHER EDUCATION

Kay Sambell, Liz McDowell and Catherine Montgomery

The Enabling Power of Assessment 5
Series Editor Claire M. Wyatt-Smith

David Carless
Susan M. Bridges
Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan
Rick Glofcheski Editors

Scaling up Assessment for Learning in Higher Education

Springer

Authenticity revisited :
The Covid Assessment Collection

(Sambell & Brown, 2020, 2021)
https://bit.ly/3mMAEFP)

THE COVID ASSESSMENT COLLECTION

Our resources around assessment during times of coronavirus give more detail of our approaches and emphasise authenticity:

- Sambell, K. and Brown, S. (23 March 2020) 'Contingency-planning: exploring rapid alternatives to face-to-face assessment'.

- Sambell, K. and Brown, S. (2 April 2020) 'Fifty tips for replacements for time-constrained, invigilated on-site exams'

- Sambell, K. and Brown, S. (1 June 2020) 'The changing landscape of assessment: some possible replacements for unseen time-constrained face-to-face invigilated exams'

- Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (17th August 2020) Writing Better Assignments in the post-Covid Era: approaches to good task design

- Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (21st August 2020) Changing assessment for good: a major opportunity for educational developers

- Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (19th March 2021) Compendium of examples of authentic assessment in practice from diverse disciplines

https://sally-brown.net/kay-sambell-and-sally-brown-covid-19-assessment-collection/

Universities started thinking about changing assessment due to Covid: let's not go back to an over-reliance on traditional exams!

- The time/place/ duration constraints carry high risks issues etc prevent the traditional exam being taken, and thereby risk business continuity interruption, which would require on-the-hoof mitigations.

- Traditional exams lack relevance to students' future lives in employment, entrepreneurship and civil society, since they are not in any meaningful way a valid representation of what work or life challenges typically require.

- The range of activities that students are asked to do in a traditional written exam are very limited, writing with a pen individually in silence, with no reference to wider resources.

- In employment and wider contexts, however, most will have internet access and a keyboard to work on, as well as the expectation that they will work as team members, often in interdisciplinary settings.

Backwash: impact of inauthenticity on students' approaches to learning

"The 'idea of the exam' can have a negative backwash effect on learning, so instead of promoting the kinds of learning that are useful for longer term (integration of knowledge, sophisticated cognitive abilities, lateral thinking, critical lateral, imaginative thinking) students see them as 'memory tests', or 'going through the motions', reproducing whatever information they assume their lecturers want to hear or see"

(Sambell et al, 2013)

'It's poor learning which you quickly forget. You just try to remember for the exam, then flush it out of your mind ready for the next exam'

More diverse exam formats.....

- Open book exams
- Take home exams

  - Sambell & Brown, (2020) 50 Tips for replacements for on-site, time-constrained invigilated exams

  - Wood, G (2020) Preparing students for open book and take-home exams

  - Villaroel et al (2020) Using principles of authentic assessment to redesign written examinations and tests

Key question post pandemic: How can we re-energise assessment so it becomes become more authentic and future-facing?

- **The use of activities that are interesting, meaningful, relevant and have long term value**

- **Feel intrinsically useful and worthwhile**

primed-for-deep-learning
mirror-real-world-applications
ownership
engaged
meaning Real
responsibility
dispositions
spread-attention-across-the-period-of-study
challenging Skills
Long-term
independent
Authentic
kinds-of-things-practitioners-actually-do
qualities lifelong autonomous
enthused relevance
outputs
assessment
self-evaluative
meaningful
engaging

Examples of some alternative assessment formats

*In-tray activities *An electronic or hard copy portfolio, *A viva voce or individual oral test, * A virtual Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), * Patchwork assessments, *Blogs, * Articles or other types of publications, *Video/audio recordings/ podcasts, * Reflective journals, *Rough guides, leaflets and other public documents/outputs, *Annotated publications, Evaluative comparisons and judgments, * Creative artefacts, *Presentations, or *Performances

See Sambell and Brown, 2020c for full descriptions of these formats, and a table indicating pros and cons of each of these.

(see June 1st 2020 'Changing Landscapes')
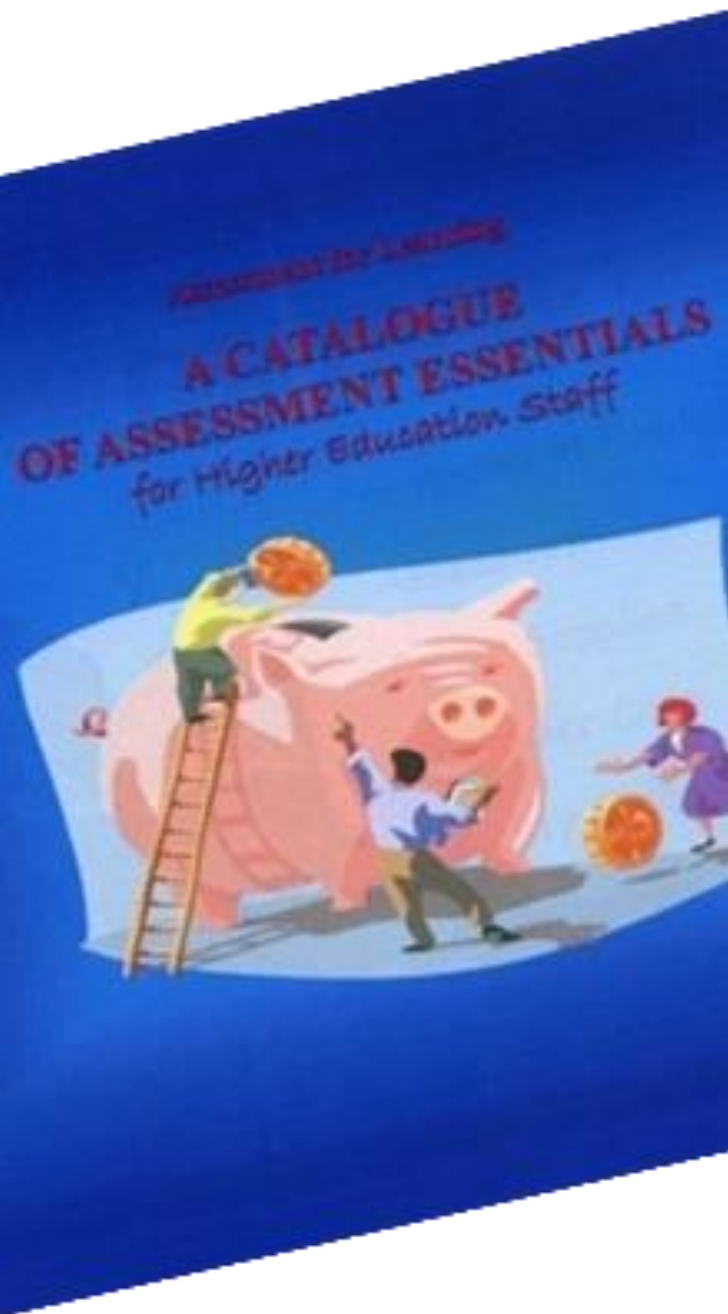
One example- creating educational guides to Assessment for Learning

"I'm bored with writing essays. There's no obligation, you're writing for a set task..and once that's been achieved then that's it. You just copy down the books in a different language"

"I put so much effort into this, read loads, you had to. With this you can't just sit there and take the notes, you have to make sense of it...to produce something that gets the message over."

"It's thinking.....It's more analytical."

An Example: traditional assessment

Thanks to
Associate Professor (Engineering Education) and Director, Center for Engineering Education Innovation (E2I), Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Ben Y B Chan

Identify five serious contingencies that could occur on site over a period of construction and identify the main actions that would need to be taken in response to these incidents which would need to be undertaken by the Civil Engineer to prevent and mitigate disaster.

Authentic assessment: a scenario is provided establishing the context for the assignment, and over the course of a 24-hour period, students are required to respond in real time to emails received from the tutor which require prompt and informed decision making

As final year degree students at HKUST as your capstone assignment integrating learning from different elements of your programme, you will be asked to work in a team to set up a simulated consultancy company, advising the management of a substantial building project in Hong Kong on construction management issues. During the course of the activity, you will be asked to respond to a changing context with timely and accurate advice, based on what you have learned here at HKUST, to demonstrate your capabilities to cope with crisis situations requiring immediate action.

Tasks

- **To be submitted two days before the assignment day: "As a team, *review* likely problematic occurrences that could occur on the building site we have been studying this year and *produce* a short summary of risks, together with feasible mitigations. This should include reference to appropriate sources including at least two journal articles".**

- **Email 1 from tutor: "In response to weather reports forecasting that a typhoon will be experienced in the locality within the next 24 hours, *draw up* an immediate plan of action for precautions to be taken to secure the site and minimise damage to works and personnel. These should be submitted two hours from receipt of this email."**

- **Email 2: "Police have advised that storm damage has resulted in land slippage as shown on the enclosed diagrams: in your team you are required to *develop and submit* within the hour a costed plan to alleviate the damage immediately".**

- **Within 10 hours, *submit* an incident report outlining causes for the landslip plus and *make recommendations* for avoidance of any similar events on this or other sites in the future.**

Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (17th August 2020) Writing Better Assignments in the post-Covid Era: approaches to good task design

Do our assessment designs promote the kinds of learning that are desired for the longer term?

DEEP APPROACHES?

Encourage students to genuinely understand the subject as opposed to juggling formulae or performing tasks in an isolated, formulaic or unconnected way?

SENSE OF BECOMING?

How far do the tasks help students feel they are starting to act as a participant in the disciplinary community?

Authenticity

PERSONAL INTEREST & OWNERSHIP?

E.g. issues *they* have identified, element of choice of topic or method?

FIDELITY? INHERENTLY MEANINGFUL?

Sense of audience, meaningful outputs, plausible contexts?

Involve learning to plan and monitor progress prior to completion, & involvement in feedback processes?

How can you write better assessment tasks?
Our Task Generator

We came up with an approach in our 17th August paper (summarised here by @SwantonSketches) which argues that by starting with the **learning outcomes**, looking for the powerful **verbs** contained therein, supplying the **object** for the verb, together with an indication of what **outcome/ evidence of achievement** is needed and wrapping this up within a **context** and supplying some '**range statements**' it's possible to design practical authentic assessments in a way that is manageable and contributes to learning by building self –efficacy.

Verb/ educational outcome	What? i.e. object	Outcome/ evidence of achievement	Modifiers/ developments/ range statements
Interpret	complex and sometimes incomplete or conflicting data	compile a summary meaningful for experts and laypersons	leading to a viable action plan for a team to implement.
Review	data from a variety of sources	produce an executive summary	for a specific audience of employers
Set up	specialised equipment appropriately	draw up a 'quick guide' for peers	to enable them to use it safely and appropriately
Evaluate	three proposed solutions to a problem	propose a further two of your own	with suggestions about what might work best
Compile	contingency plans for a professional environment	produce disaster recovery in case of a serious emergency	leading to mitigations and remediation

Example : Thanks to Thomas Broderick of Munster Technological University in Ireland

Traditional exam/essay question: "In designing a range of supports at your residential home for persons with a disability, what health initiatives would you propose for the service user in the following areas: physical wellness, social wellness and occupational/vocational wellness?"

Alternative assessment: Envisage that you are working on placement in a local residential home with persons with disability and considering the impacts of Covid, you have been asked to introduce some new health initiatives to support residents in their overall wellness.

Tasks

1. **Research** what the wellness needs of service-users are and what kinds of health initiatives are most appropriate to support their wellness at this time. **Present** this as a set of up to **ten bullet points**, with a list on one side of A4 of your references (texts, leaflets, websites etc.).

2. **Prepare a plan** to implement **three** health initiatives, one each to support physical, social and occupational/vocational needs of the service user. (One side of A4 for each initiative).

3. **Present in the form of a table** what you think are the principal benefits of the initiatives you are proposing and any problems or pitfalls you could envisage in implementing each of these.

4. **Provide a rationale** for the recommendations you are making written in the form of an **email** for your busy line manager.

5. In your **reflective diary**, comment on what you have most learned from this assignment and note what insights you have developed from undertaking this assignment that you can carry forward into your future working life.

Task: can you create an authentic assessment using any of these triggers?

- Interpret complex and sometimes incomplete or conflicting data, compiling a summary that is meaningful both for experts and laypersons, leading to a viable action plan.

- Review data from a variety of self-sought published materials, informal media and other sources, and produce an executive summary for a specific audience.

- Set up specialised equipment appropriately and draw up a 'quick guide' for peers that would enable them to use it safely and appropriately.

- Argue for a particular solution based on a range of complex contextual factors, together with a reasoned rationale for this choice.

- Evaluate three proposed solutions to a problem and propose a further two of your own, with suggestions about what might work best.

- Prioritise action to be taken in a busy work context where all tasks appear equally urgent;

- In a given context, draw up an action plan with milestones of achievement and measurable indicators of success.

- Research and reference an area of innovation, and draw conclusions from your sources of information for the success or failure of the initiative.

- Offer synopses of multiple and diverse sources including text, image and data which can explain a particular phenomenon discussed within a programme.

- Critique three perspectives on or readings of a text, choosing one that is most convincing to you and giving your reasons for this choice

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