Making assessment future fit: ensuring authentic assessment approaches in the light of Coronavirus changes to HE practice
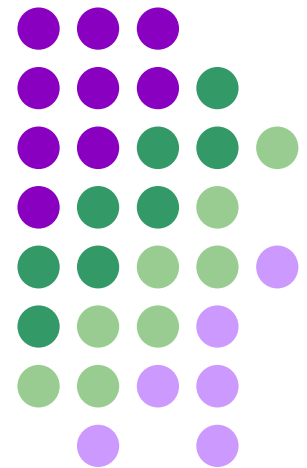
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Wednesday September 9th Sally Brown @ProfSallyBrown

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PROF. KAY SAMBELL

The world changed in Spring 2020 and so did university assessment!

- **In Spring 2020, just about every university globally was faced with a requirement to move from a substantial diet of unseen, time-constrained, invigilated exams in person to methodologies that could be undertaken remotely.**

- **For decades, many have argued for a radical restructuring of assessment in Higher Education to integrate assessment more fully into the learning process as Assessment for Learning thereby ensuring it is more fit-for-purpose and helpful to students.**

- **In this keynote we argue that we've never had a better chance to really shake up higher education assessment, because going back to the old ways is just unthinkable!**
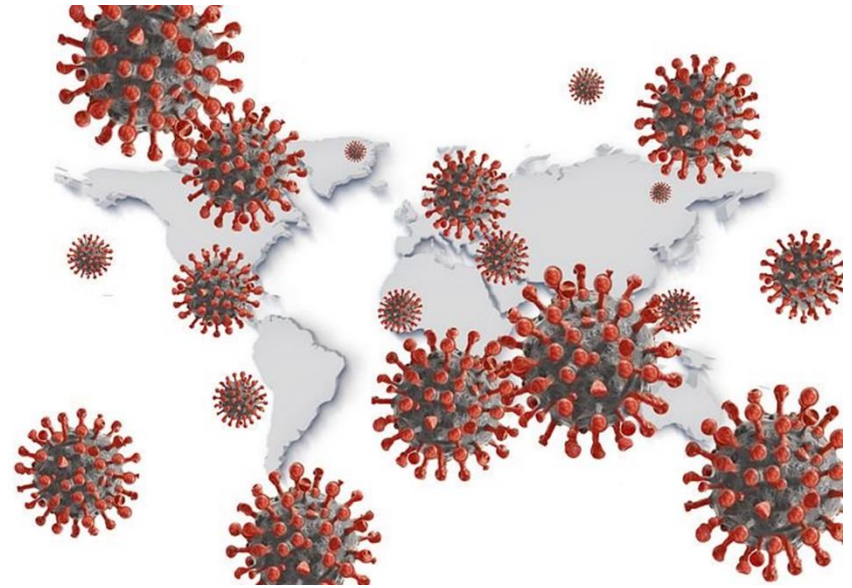
Everyone has been affected and we've all had to change orientation rapidly

- **Students have** had to battle with working from home, often with sub-optimal kit, poor broadband access, caring responsibilities and nowhere peaceful to work, against a background of high anxiety. They've been flexible but won't always be so forgiving;

- **University staff** have faced often exactly the same conditions and everyone (academics, learning support staff, librarians, quality assurers, educational developers and others) had to move quickly to do the best by their students without any loss to quality and standards. With some exceptions, we've pulled it off, but we don't ever want to be put in the same position again;

- **Senior managers** were under huge pressure to manage the process under conditions that changed rapidly and unpredictably. Unless they had strong pedagogic backgrounds themselves, they had to rely on advice from internal and external colleagues (including us!) to make matters workable.

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

- 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

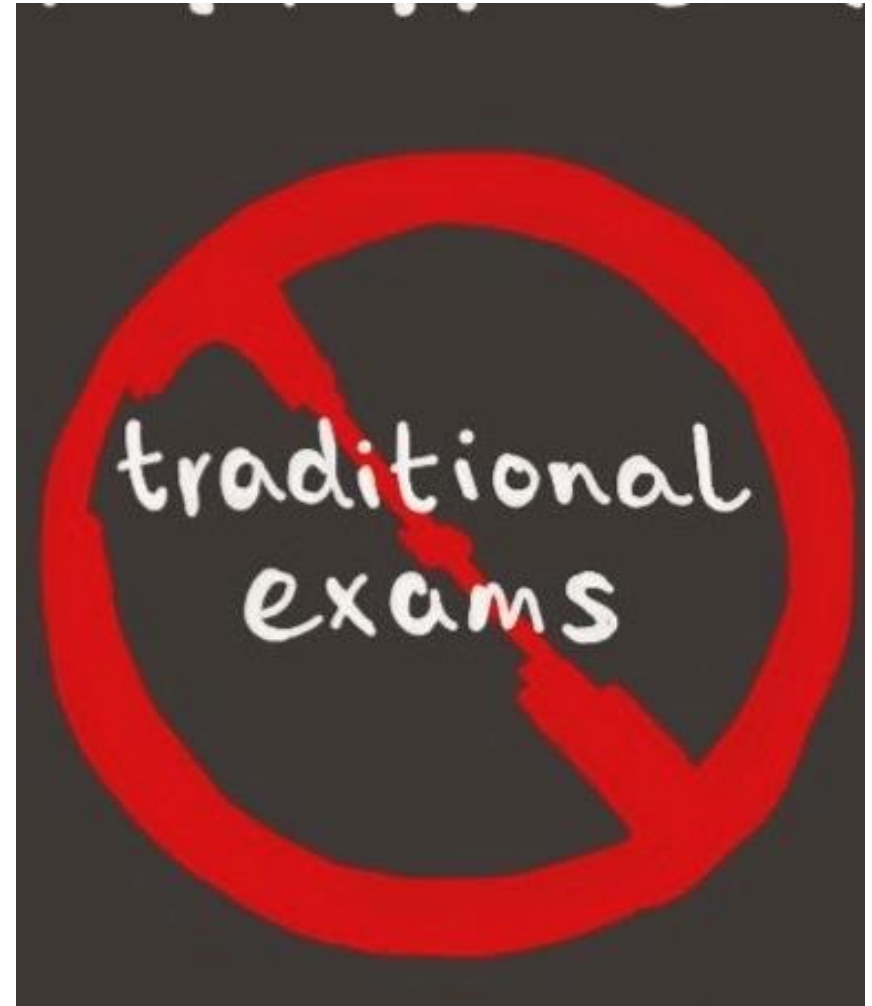Find them all collected here and look out for the next one!

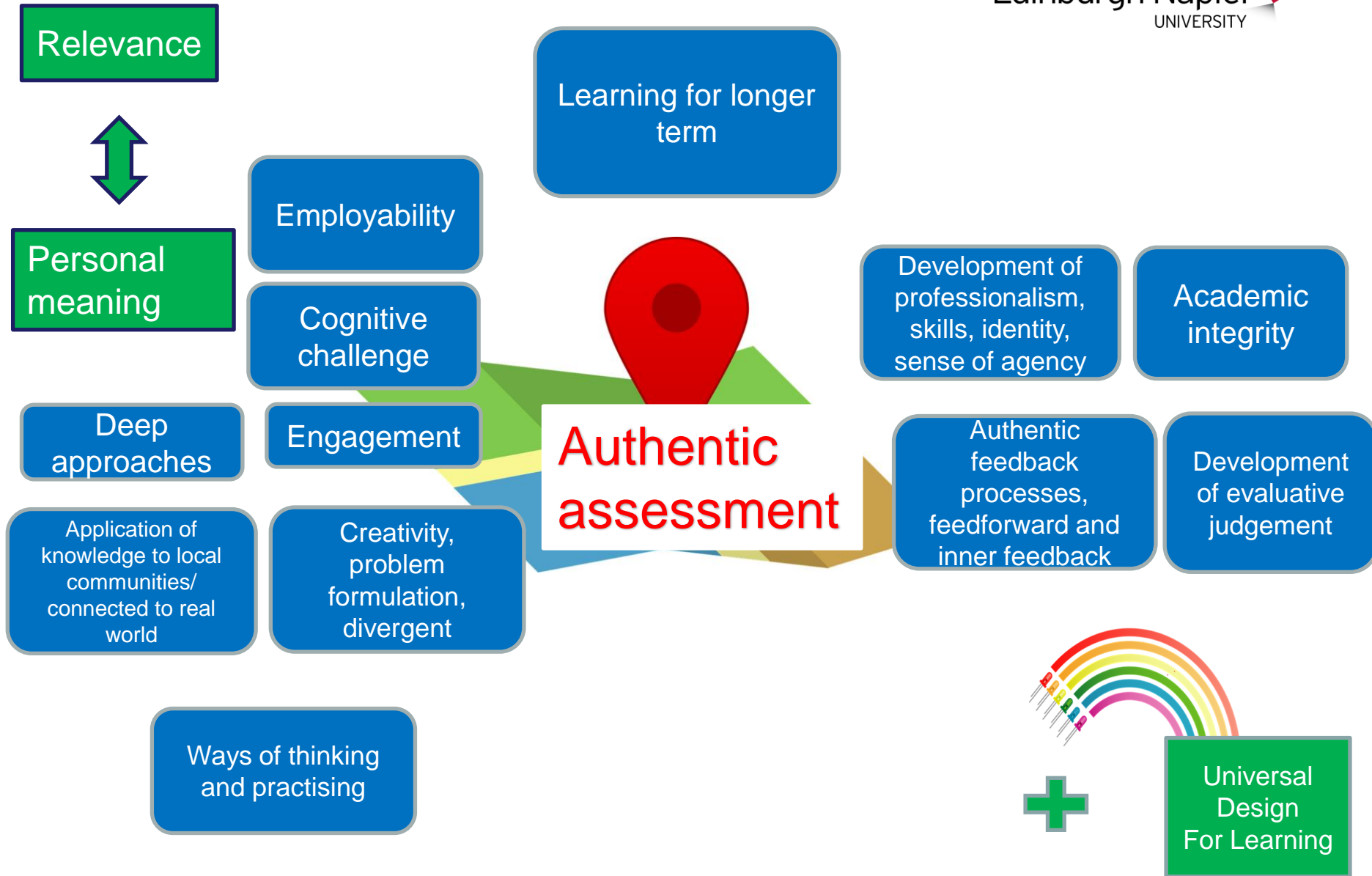https://sally-brown.net/kay-sambell-and-sally-brown-covid-19-assessment-collection/

We started thinking about changing assessment due to Covid and began reviewing the role of traditional assessment

Unseen, time-constrained exams have been known to have their limitations for some time and this seems like a wonderful opportunity, not just to make changes in crisis conditions, but also to improve university assessment forever!

It's the best opportunity Enterprise educators have ever had to make assessment more relevant and authentic.

Relevance

Personal meaning

Employability

Cognitive challenge

Deep approaches

Engagement

Application of knowledge to local communities/ connected to real world

Creativity, problem formulation, divergent

Ways of thinking and practising

Learning for longer term

Authentic assessment

Development of professionalism, skills, identity, sense of agency

Academic integrity

Authentic feedback processes, feedforward and inner feedback

Development of evaluative judgement

Universal Design For Learning

Think for a moment or two about what kinds of authentic assessment you would prefer to see used

diagrams-with-exploded-text
podcasts video oral-tests
performances
patchwork-assessment
explainer infographic
publications
instruction-manual
graphic-novel interviews in-tray-exercises
vivas posters portfolios
open-book blogs leaflets
multiple-choice-questions
take-home-papers
wikis
rough-guides storyboard

WRITING BETTER ASSESSMENTS

PROF. SALLY BROWN

PROF. KAY SAMBELL

@SketchSketches

🚫 traditional exams

why?
- ineffective
- fragile
- inauthentic

3 decades of educational scholarship →

AFTER ASSESSMENT

FIT FOR PURPOSE
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING
= authentic
life - relevant tasks

why?
- foster self regulation
- present high order cognitive challenges

alternatives?

① OPEN BOOK CASE STUDY
- SCENARIO
PROS / COST

② DIGITAL LEARNING PACK
- CHECK LISTS
- FACT SHEETS
- RECIPES
- PARTICIPATION
- INVITES
- REFLECTION

③ CONSULTANT'S OPINION
EVIDENCE & OPINION
Client Report

how?
START with the LEARNING OUTCOMES → VERB → OBJECT → OUTCOME/EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT
ADD CONTEXT

Working in partnership with students to improve assessment

Many of these innovative approaches can offer greater possibilities for students to contribute to the assessment design, development and quality assurance processes, which Healey *et al* (2016) for example consider offers significant benefit to both staff and students. Students, we suggest, can in redesigning assessment post-Covid19, potentially:

- Help us design briefings that are clear, meaningful and recognizably authentic, thereby helping to avoid excessive numbers of queries from students who don't understand what is required.

- Advise us about special difficulties students might have complying with requirements, that might not be obvious to the assessment designers.

- Provide feedback on formats and approaches that require technologies and applications that students may not have at home (good broadband, exclusive use of laptops, the correct software, quiet places to work etc.).

- Advise on the extent that feedback could be helpful on replacement assessments.

Conclusions

- **Things can never be the same** as formerly is unquestionable so it is more important than ever, to design assessments that minimise stress for students, boost their sense of authenticity and reduce the temptation for poor academic conduct.

- **Now is a chance like never before to be radical, innovative and powerful in making changes borne of these difficult times that can ultimately improve assessments in universities for all stakeholders in particular in relation to enterprise education.**

- **We've advocated for many years the importance of making assessment truly for learning, and in making the most of the current situation to reengineer assessment for the future, we need to maintain and further advance this principle.**

References and other useful reading

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