

## The University of Hertfordshire's Curriculum Design Toolkit.

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### Introduction

The University of Hertfordshire's Blended Learning Unit and Learning and Teaching Institute have designed a Curriculum Design Toolkit to help staff take a considered look at their current curricula in terms of their learning, teaching, assessment and the learning environments that they provide.

This article provides background information on the toolkit as well as guidance on accessing the resources. The toolkit is split into eight strands, each of which represents a relevant challenge within Higher Education teaching which has received prominence over the last five years. The toolkit is based on the ethos and design of Chickering and Gamson's "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" (1987).

### Background information:

In 1985, with support from the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson gathered a small task force of 12 scholars to develop a set of principles for good practice to help teaching staff in Higher Education Institutions consider and develop their practice. The intent to develop a set of principles that were "accessible, understandable, practical and widely applicable" was motivated by concerns that research reports and literature reviews failed to reach staff members. There was an overriding desire by Chickering and Gamson to present a succinct and memorable set of principles that all staff could apply, rather than long lists of recommendations or generalised theories. In 1987 Chickering and Gamson published their "Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education" with an emphasis on *how* we do things rather than *what* we teach.

To help staff access the principles, Chickering and Gamson developed self-assessment inventories for Faculty (staff) and Institutions. The inventories contain accessing statements about the principles to which the staff can answer “Very often, Often, Occasionally, Rarely or Never”. The inventories were designed to “help staff members (Faculty), departments, colleges and universities, examine individual behaviours and institutional policies and practices” (Chickering and Gamson, 1989). The intent was to use the principles and inventories to improve practice and not as a basis for individual judgement about performance or summative evaluation.

### **Curriculum Design Toolkit:**

Learning from, and including the work of Chickering and Gamson, the University of Hertfordshire's Curriculum Design Toolkit contains eight strands. Each strand contains a number of interrelating documents and components. These components are:

Research/informed Principles for Good Practice,  
Accessing statements,  
Self-diagnostic tool,  
Consideration of features and consequences of practice  
Hints and tips to help improve practice.

An overview of the toolkit, its various strands and associated components is given here (<http://prezi.com/cibi5pa3d/curriculum-design-toolkit/>). The overview is provided via the presentation software Prezi. Prezi's zooming functionality provides an opportunity for the viewer to gain both a wide scale overview (zoom-out) as well as focused explorations on specific strands and the components within each strand (zoom-in).

In this paper there are various links to video files with audio commentary that can be accessed by clicking on the following camcorder icon.



When opening Prezi, the toolkit will load allowing all eight strands to be visible. As a viewer you can then zoom in and focus on different elements to suit your interests. By clicking on an object it will zoom into view and you can further explore the images/text/video or web links. To zoom back out you can use the magnifier on the side of the screen or you can return 'home'. (The materials are all also available via the University of Hertfordshire's [Learning and Teaching Institute](#)'s web site in Word and Excel documents).



Figure 1. *Ways in which staff may use the toolkit*

We offer no diktat on use but hope staff find the toolkit useful through exploration and application relevant to their needs.

### **Principles for Good Practice:**

For each strand of the toolkit between five and eight Principles for Good Practice have been identified either directly from the literature (e.g. Chickering and Gamson) or developed following the review of pedagogic literature; consideration of relevant legislation and/or guidance from experts. Following the example of Chickering and Gamson we wanted to ensure that the Principles were applicable across all disciplines and within different teaching and learning situations. We have tried to ensure that the language is to-the-point and jargon-free, and that the materials are easily accessible.



The eight strands of the toolkit are:

1. Good practice for Higher Education (*Adapted from Chickering and Gamson, 1987*)
2. Assessment for Learning
3. Research Informed Teaching
4. Inclusive Teaching
5. Employability
6. International Engagement
7. Sustainability
8. Enterprise Education

Taking as an example the Assessment for Learning strand we will guide you through the different elements of the toolkit.

### **Assessment for Learning Principles:**

The Assessment for Learning principles have been developed by considering the large body of research on assessment within Higher Education which identifies the significant influence of assessment on student study behaviours and their approaches to learning (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 1994; Rowntree, 1977; Snyder, 1970). The Assessment for Learning principles synthesise some of the guidance making it easily accessible, applicable and memorable.

Clicking on the red Assessment for Learning image within the toolkit will cause Prezi to zoom into the principles (see figure 2).





Figure 2. *Principles for Good Practice in Assessment for Learning*

### **Accessing the Principles:**

Each principle has five underpinning statements to enable consideration of the principle and its application in academic practice. Chickering and Gamson's Faculty Inventory has ten accessing statements per principle but within the UH toolkit we have included only five for each principle recognising the time constraints on busy staff members. Further, the accessing statements are not intended as a definitive list but act to offer examples and stimulate dialogue.

The Assessment for Learning principles specifically draw on the work of; Gibbs & Simpson (2004); Nicol's work on feedback (2007); the National Union of Students' guidance on Feedback (2010); and the Assessment Standards Manifesto as developed by the Weston-Manor-Group (2007). All the accessing statements relate to the guidance provided within these referenced articles. Clicking on the first small icon to the right of a principle, will bring the underpinning statements into view. Considering the first principle, you can see the accessing statements in figure 3. By reading the statements and identifying when, and how, you consider assessment criteria with your students, will enable you (and/or your module/programme team) to consider any gaps in your current practice and may stimulate some thoughts as to aspects that you may like to improve. In our experience, the statements provide useful conversation starters and enable staff to engage in dialogue with each other (and with students) about their current activities.

## Curriculum Design Toolkit:

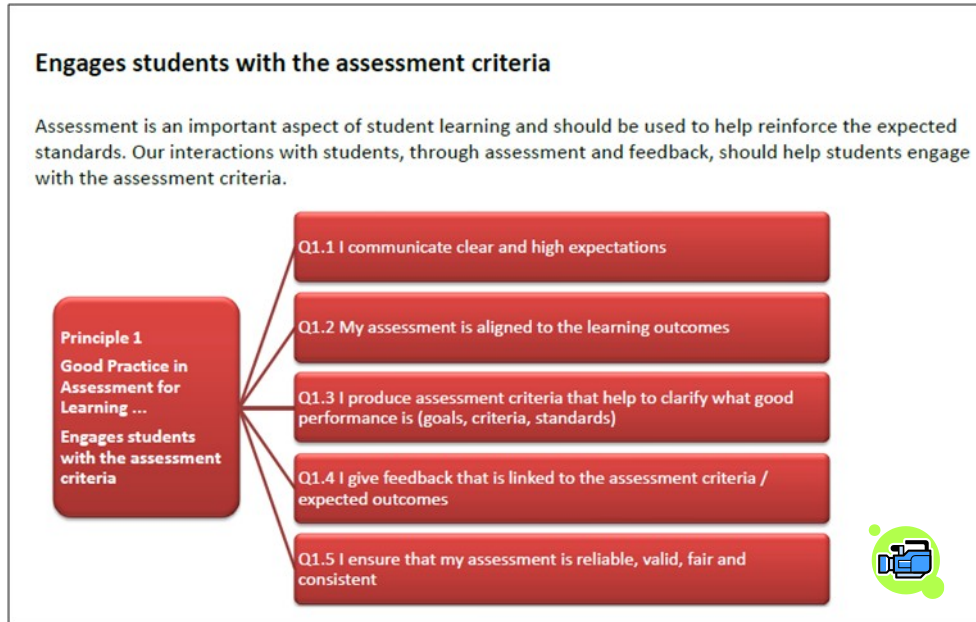


Figure 3: *Accessing statements underpinning the first Assessment for Learning principle.*

### Diagnostic tool:

Each of the principles and the statements are available within a diagnostic spreadsheet (accessed via the spanner symbol in Prezi) to provide a slightly more objective review of practice. The spreadsheet enables you to indicate whether you believe you meet each of the statements 'Very often, Often, Occasionally, Rarely or Never'. There is also an opportunity to indicate if the statement isn't relevant to your particular experience. Using radio buttons you can select how your practice relates to each of the statements (figure 4).



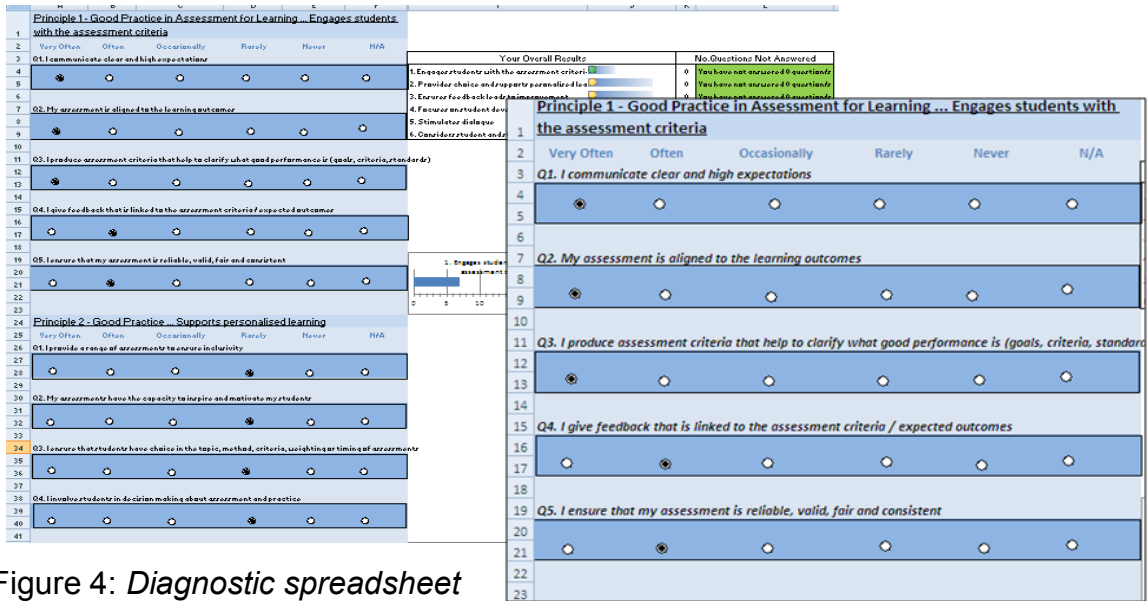


Figure 4: Diagnostic spreadsheet

As you work through the statements associated with each principle, the spreadsheet provides you with an indication of how you are doing on each principle via a traffic light system (figure 5) thus helping you to identify areas of most need on which to focus your efforts.

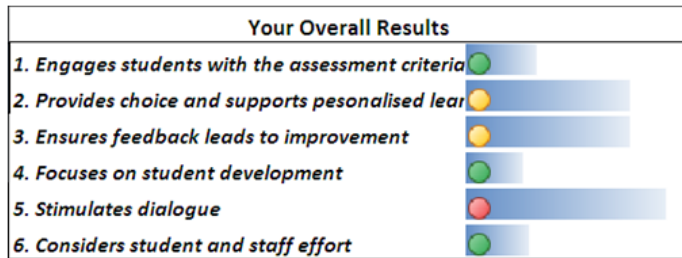


Figure 5: Traffic light indication of results

**Features and Consequences:** Each strand of the toolkit contains “Features and Consequences” which are accessed by clicking on the red, yellow and green icon (the middle of three small images to the right of each principle in the Prezi link). These resources have been designed in consultation with students to enable consideration of diagnostic results in the context of what your actual practice may be like (features) and the consequences of this practice for the student (consequences). The text is presented within three columns (red, yellow and

green) and the text above the midline indicates the features of practice and the text below the line suggests the consequences for the students (figure 6).

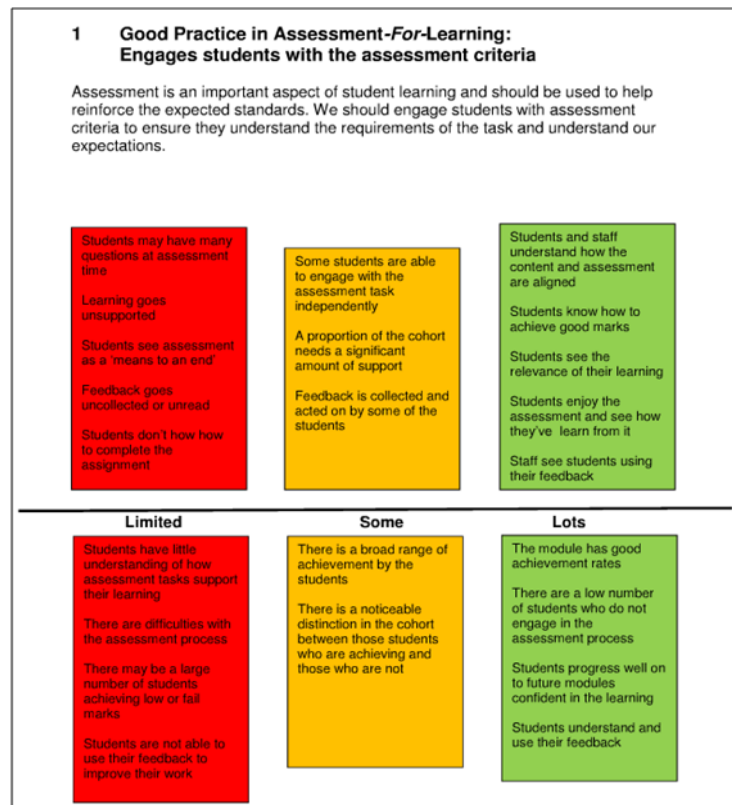


Figure 6: *Features and Consequences associated with Assessment for Learning principle 1.*

### Hints and Tips:

The final resource within each strand is the 'Hints and Tips' which provide examples of how the principles are being applied in practice and enable you to consider ideas which may be relevant for your teaching. The hints and tips are drawn largely from the University of Hertfordshire although we have provided examples from other Institutions or web resources where appropriate. To view the hints and tips associated with a principle, click on the third icon to the right of the principle and the tips will zoom into view (figure 7). In some cases the tips are video clips and Prezi will link directly to the clip within YouTube.







Figure 7: Hints and Tips for Assessment for Learning principle 1.



**Conclusion:**

Through the toolkit you should be able to review your current practice and consider how to enhance your teaching and assessment and ultimately student learning. While there is a structured pathway through each strand of the toolkit, you may use the diagnostic to give an objective overview of your practice or you may choose to use the principles and statements to stimulate dialogue; it is entirely up to you. We hope you find the toolkit useful and explore it in the best way to suit you.

The toolkit is a developing resource and we welcome feedback on use, as well as examples and tips from your own practice which we can add to relevant strands.

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Sustainability: Philip Porter

Enterprise Education: Mark Russell, Nigel Culkin, Norbert Morawetz and Helen Barefoot

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