



**Accrediting Effective Assessment Teams in Higher Education:
The Assessment Specialist Team Award (ASTA)**

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Accrediting Effective Assessment Teams in HE

The **Assessment Specialist Team Award (ASTA)** acknowledges and accredits excellence in assessment practice in higher education. The award is applicable to staff (academic and professional) and students who can evidence a research-informed approach to assessment.

The ASTA aligns with the UK Professional Standards Framework (2011, 2023), and EUA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015).

The underpinning research-informed assessment framework to support colleagues in evidencing excellence in assessment is the **EAT Framework** (Evans, 2016; 2020; 2022). This framework highlights twelve interrelated dimensions and sub-dimensions of effective assessment and feedback practice underpinned by key concepts including **assessment literacy** (understanding of the assessment context), **self-regulation** (the ability to choose the right strategies to address a task and to use them well), and **agentic engagement** (the ability to influence one's assessment environment to make it work better for oneself and others).

The EAT Framework was developed to support application of a research-informed and inclusive approach to assessment within higher education. A key element of this work is working in partnership with staff and students. The team award highlights the importance of developing a **shared regulatory approach**.

Shared regulation of assessment occurs where the regulatory processes are interdependent among those participating in a collaborative task (Hadwin et al., 2011). This is all about teams regulating together to achieve shared goals. This is different to our understanding of self-regulation which usually means co-regulated learning, where a learners' interaction with others allows them to internalize regulatory processes for themselves.

In socially shared regulation of learning and teaching including assessment, colleagues (staff and students) work as a coherent team to attain shared goals. Furthermore, in socially shared regulation, all colleagues participate equally in the regulation of each other's actions, whereas in co-regulation, the learner interacts with a person who has a superior or more expert role (teacher/mentor or more knowledgeable peer). Recent research has shown that both shared- and co-regulation can be empirically differentiated, with shared regulation enhancing group performance, and the use of more advanced shared assessment strategies (Panadero and Järvelä, 2015).

References

Evans, C. (2022). The EAT Framework. Enhancing Assessment and Feedback Practice in Higher Education. Inclusivehe.org

Hadwin, A. F., Järvelä, S., & Miller, M. (2011). Self-regulated, co-regulated, and socially shared regulation of learning. In B. J. Zimmerman & D. H. Schunk (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance* (pp. 65–84). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Panadero, E., & Järvelä, S. (2015). Socially shared regulation of learning: A Review. *European Psychologist* 20(3):190-203

Key Resources

- The **EAT Framework** (2022) and further resources can be found at: <https://inclusivehe.org/>
- [Assessment Accreditation Guidance](#)
- The **Self-regulatory Approach to Assessment Practices Report**
- **A Guide to Using the EAT Assessment Framework:** A Resource for Developing Assessment Practice in Higher Education.
- **Training resources:** Templates, tools, and further EAT resources are located at <https://www.eat-erasmus.org/erasmus-training>
- [Alternative forms of the EAT wheel](#) can directly be downloaded via the hyperlink provided and from the [accessible version of EAT](#) (Evans, 2020) at <https://www.eatframework.com/>

Who is the ASTA accreditation relevant to?

- The ASTA is a team award.
- The ASTA is relevant to all academic and professional services staff and students engaged in research-informed approaches to developing their assessment practice within higher education.
- The ASTA can also be used to support development of a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) (Advance HE). The key area of difference with the CATE is that the ASTA is purely focused on assessment.

The importance of a team approach

In developing an integrated approach to assessment, the real success is in bringing students and staff together to develop shared understandings and shared goals.

- Assessment does not happen in a vacuum, assessment transcends discipline and module boundaries, and if we are to best support students, we need to be adopting a collaborative approach.
- A team approach (staff and students) promotes a **shared understanding of principles underpinning effective assessment feedback** and supports more consistent practice.
- Working with cross-disciplinary teams can support creativity in assessment and development of high functioning assessment communities of practice.
- Team working should enable efficiencies in the design and delivery of assessment and feedback and reduce unnecessary duplication.
- Team working should support a more coherent assessment experience for both staff and students.
- Team working ensures that within a team that all key skills areas are covered as identified in Evans (2018) Integrated Academic (Evans et al. 2021 –reference provided below).

Useful references:

Evans, C. (2018) Integrated academic.

https://inclusiveheorg.files.wordpress.com/2022/08/integrated_academic_2022.pdf)

Evans, C., Kandiko Howson, C., Alex Forsythe, A., & Edwards, C(2021) What constitutes high quality higher education pedagogical research?, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 46:4, 525-546, DOI: [10.1080/02602938.2020.1790500](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1790500)

Submission requirements

To be considered for an ASTA award, teams should submit **three documents** in total.

Document 1: Context summary Document (500 - 750 words) explaining the background to your assessment work in higher education, progress to date, and in relation to what we know about effective assessment and feedback. This can be completed as a word or pdf file.

Document 2: Principles underpinning your assessment and feedback approach

See Blank Document A which requests information on your approach to key concepts underpinning a research-informed approach to assessment. There are 9 sections (answers should be a maximum of 250 words each).

Document 3: Three case studies to demonstrate the impact your team has had on assessment and feedback.

Each of the three case studies should be no more than 1000 words. Follow the template provided to complete this.

Key Documents

Document 1: Context Summary Document

Part 1: Brief overview (approx. 150 words)

- a) Name of your team
- b) What is your teams' assessment and feedback focus?
- c) What is the rationale underpinning the remit of the team? What are you trying to achieve?
- d) Who are the key members of the team and what are their official roles within your organisation, and what are their roles within the assessment team?
- e) How did the team come together to work on assessment and feedback?
- f) What scale are you working at? (Institutional, faculty, programme, module/unit etc.)
- g) Who is your intended audience? Who are you trying to reach?

Part 2: In more detail (approx. 500 words max)

- (i) What is the current context of assessment and feedback in your institution in relation to the **12 key areas of effective assessment and feedback as highlighted in the EAT Framework** ([EAT wheels can be accessed using this hyperlink](#)). Which dimensions and sub-dimensions of assessment and feedback practice are well developed, and which less so? (See summaries of the 12 areas of EAT in Appendix 1).
- (ii) Describe your journey in building your team and focus, and key milestones to date including key challenges.

Document 2: Principles underpinning your assessment and feedback approach.

Please explain how you are addressing key principles of assessment and feedback in your approach to enhancing assessment and feedback in your organisation. Use no more than 250 words for each of the nine areas in **Document A**.

Information can be found on assessment and feedback principles in the EAT Framework, and in the [summary of the concepts underpinning EAT](#), and [Appendix A](#)

[Research on these areas of practice can also be found in the EAT Framework and self-regulatory approach to assessment and feedback guides.](#)

Document 3: Provide three case studies to demonstrate the impact of your work on assessment and feedback. Each case study should be no more than 1000 words and should clearly:

- a) Provide a clear focus for the assessment area you looked at and the theoretical underpinnings of what you tried to do.




b) Clarify what you did and how you did it – what was your methodology?

What were the outcomes of what you did? (See Impact table as a prompt to support you in this).

Appendices taken from EAT (2022) and Assessment Accreditation Guidance Doc




[Appendix 1: EAT Dimensions and Sub-dimensions](#) (Evans, 2022)


Assessment Literacy Dimension

| Sub-dimension | | Key ideas |
|---|--|-----------|
| <p>AL 1</p>  <p>I have a good understanding of the assessment requirements, and how to do well.</p> <p><i>To do well students need to know what they need to do and why, have a clear and accurate conception of what quality looks like, know how they are going to get there, and have the self-belief that they can.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making assessment requirements and notions of quality explicit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Importance of shared conceptions of quality between students and academics. • Emphasis on beliefs and values. • Importance of the role of individual differences in how learners make sense of and process information. • Emphasis on development of quality and conditional use of self-regulation strategies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasis on activities to support learner internalisation of standards. ○ Lecturer/student goal alignment. | |
| <p>AL 2</p>  <p>I understand how assessment is organised and the links between different elements.</p> <p><i>Understanding how assessment fits together is essential to support effective learning and best use of resource.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence and alignment of programme design. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear programme blueprints • Ensuring shared understandings of rationale underpinning programme design. • Addressing information processing and cognitive styles in how information is understood; taking care to reduce cognitive overload. • Self-regulatory planning skills/strategies – recognising connections between tasks and prioritising. | |
| <p>AL 3</p>  <p>I am clear about my role in assessment and my responsibility to contribute as an active participant.</p> <p><i>How students come to co-own their programmes with educators and see themselves as active contributors to the assessment feedback process</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on promoting student engagement and co-ownership of assessment. • Students as co-partners in assessment (clarity of roles and expectations). • Lecturer expertise in promoting student engagement through design of assessment. • Addressing student and academic beliefs and conceptions about the student role within assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training to support shared cultures of assessment. | |
| <p>AL 4</p> <p>I am clear about the requirements of the discipline.</p> <p><i>How students and educators are inducted into a community of learners so that they feel that they can make a valued</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying what a deep approach within a discipline looks like. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Signposting of core and threshold concepts. ○ Emphasis on epistemological understanding. ○ Modelling different ways of achieving excellence. • Importance of belonging and relatedness – relational capital in managing discipline interactions/transitions. | |




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|  | <p>contribution to learning impacts progression and retention.</p> | |
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Assessment Feedback Dimension

| Sub-dimension | | Key ideas |
|--|---|---|
| <p>AF 1</p>  | <p>I know how to seek, use, apply feedback, and provide feedback to others.</p> <p><i>Feedback is a finite resource that should be used judiciously and equitably.</i></p> <p><i>A focus on essentials is required to ensure students can access and act on the central feedback message and contribute to feedback.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring shared understandings of quality and efficiency of feedback. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Importance of simplifying the feedback message to promote accessibility. ○ Importance of dialogue between academics and students to promote shared understandings of the purposes of feedback, and in relation to goals. • Feedback as co-constructed and multifaceted to include self-generation of feedback, seeking and utilisation of feedback cues from the environment • Importance of students' conceptions of feedback, personal beliefs, motives, schema, knowledge base, self-regulatory skills, assessment feedback history, and confidence. |
| <p>AF 2</p>  | <p>I realise the value of formative assessment opportunities to test my understanding and contribute resources to support this process.</p> <p><i>Early use of formative assessment opportunities assists students in understanding assessment requirements for themselves</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of individual differences in framing feedback opportunities. • Providing early opportunities for students to calibrate judgements on the quality of their work, test preconceptions and schema, and support metacognitive monitoring accuracy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitating the progressive development of students' knowledge and skills – repeated opportunities to observe, emulate, test, and apply ideas. ○ Providing opportunities for repeated practice to support automation of skills drawing on information processing perspectives. |
| <p>AF 3</p>  | <p>I ensure that I do the necessary groundwork to participate effectively in peer support activities.</p> <p><i>Engaging in the development of curriculum and peer support impacts students' evaluation capacity.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting authentic peer engagement activities to support the processes of self-assessment, and ofco-and shared regulation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using peer assessment to promote self-assessment capabilities and understanding of quality for oneself. ○ Supporting individual agency and individual accountability within the peer assessment process. • Developing students' filtering capacity to support discernment in the selection and use of peer feedback. |
| <p>AF4</p> | <p>I make good use of opportunities to evaluate work of others to support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding the development of self-assessment skills throughout the curriculum. |

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|  | <p>my understanding of standards.</p> <p><i>It is about promoting multiple acts of comparison.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing student beliefs about self-assessment ability and emotional challenges of self-assessment. • Promoting the development of self-monitoring and self-evaluation skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working with students to develop their cognitive abilities in aggregating perceptions over multiple experiences. ○ Modelling of self-assessment strategies to support accuracy and appropriate use of strategies. • Emphasis on immersing students in activities to promote internalisation of standards. |
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Assessment Design Dimension

| Sub-dimension | | Key Ideas |
|--|--|---|
| <p>AD 1</p>  | <p>I understand the rules of assessment and know how to question things I do not understand about the assessment process.</p> <p><i>Ensuring robust and transparent processes and procedures with emphasis on QA literacy promotes ownership, access, and perceptions of fairness.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring transparency of policy and process. • Clear benchmarking of standards and opportunities for students to work with academics in marking and moderation activities. • Understanding of cognitive, political, social, and cultural capital implicated in navigating the rules of assessment. • Making local assessment cultures explicit- understanding of individual differences in how assessment rules are interpreted and enacted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing opportunities for students to assess and moderate work and engage in discussions around how grading of work is decided. • Encouragement to challenge understandings of rules as part of an agentic approach. |
| <p>AD 2</p>  | <p>I understand disciplinary conventions and what it is to be competent as a student of a specific discipline, and how I can make a significant contribution.</p> <p><i>Co-construction of the curriculum in clarifying a deep approach supports what it is to think, act and be within a discipline.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of holistic and deep approaches to learning. • Focus on process and not just product – progressive development of knowledge and skills. • Emphasis on authentic practice and student ownership of assessment design, and development of useful products. • Promotion of high level self-regulatory skills and efficiency in learning: using the right strategies and using them well. |
| <p>AD 3</p>  | <p>I know how to access resources that I need to support my understanding and am able to advocate effectively for my own needs.</p> <p><i>Inclusive assessment promotes equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunities to do well.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory pedagogy emphasising equal access to assessment and opportunities to do well. • Awareness of how individuals/groups make sense of information. • Emphasis on promoting agency and autonomy within the learning context (negotiated choice). • Reasonable adjustments embedded in assessment design from the outset. |

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| <p>AD4</p>  | <p>I am prepared to contribute to the development and evaluation of assessment on my programme.</p> <p><i>Evaluation embedded within assessment design to ensure a dynamic and attuned curriculum is the joint responsibility of academics and students.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum seen as dynamic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informed use of data to support iterative development of it. • Predictive use of data to ensure individual/group differences supported. • Co-ownership/co-construction - the joint responsibility of academics and students in assessment design – importance of student voice as part of team-based design. • Importance of self-regulation training for academics and students – exploring student and academic profiles. |
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Appendix 2

| Considering Impact (from Accreditation Guidance Doc) | |
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| <p>REACH: To what extent did your intervention reach your intended audience of lecturers and students?</p> | |
| <p>Outcomes: Performance; skills development; products What was significant about what you did? What was the scale of the difference it made? Was it worth doing? What were the unintended outcomes (positive and negative)?</p> | |
| Student Learning Outcomes | |
| Prompts | How would you measure this? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the impacts on students' learning outcomes? • Did it narrow gaps in attainment between more and less advantaged students? • Did all students benefit equally? • Did those who were more engaged do better than those who did not? • Did students produce high quality outputs/products? | |
| Impact on Behaviours/Beliefs | |
| <p>How did your intervention impact student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beliefs about their role in assessment • confidence • engagement in assessment • understanding of assessment requirements • ability to use, seek and give feedback • wellbeing • completion rate | |
| Student Satisfaction | |
| <p>Did your intervention enhance satisfaction? Were any groups less satisfied than others? (socio-economic status; age; ethnicity; gender; sex; mode of study etc.)</p> | |
| ASSESSMENT DESIGN / Performance: Was assessment design improved as a consequence of your intervention? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher quality assessment design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ coherence ○ consistency in quality ○ clearer progression | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ more manageable assessment ○ greater focus on meaningful assessment ○ >authenticity of assessment – and relevance. ○ embedded reasonable adjustments ○ less bureaucracy ○ greater transparency ○ increased partnership between students and lecturers ○ more emphasis on student opportunities to test their understanding of quality for themselves – embedded peer and self-assessment. | |
| <p>Impact on lecturer behaviours: What were the impacts on lecturers? Do they have a better understanding of assessment?</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lecturer competency in assessment ● shared understandings of quality ● engagement in training ● impact on lecturer conceptions of assessment and the role of students in the process ● lecturer confidence ● lecturer assessment literacy ● lecturer collaboration ● shared understandings of quality | |
| <p>Impacts on policy</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Institutional ● Sector – impacts across other HEIs ● Cross Sector – impacts across different sectors, disciplines and/or professions. ● Government Policy ● International reach of approaches used | |
| <p>Sustainability: longer term gains What have you implemented that has become part of business as usual – will it be maintained? Student skill development beyond immediate assessment task; retention and development of new understandings; ongoing collaborations etc.</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are changes you made now embedded within curriculum? ● Have the gains made by students and lecturers been sustained beyond the immediate module/time of intervention? ● What effective assessment networks have you developed? ● Changes in attitudes? ● Upskilling of lecturers? ● More efficient use of resource? | |
| <p>Transferability: Extent to which the ideas translate/are applicable across contexts (programmes, disciplines, institutions, internationally). Were there any subject specific findings that have relevance to the sector? How can learning be adapted and utilized elsewhere? What are the key messages/learning from this work</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality of links – partnerships ● Reach of work across the sector | |
| <p>What personal learning do you take away from the project?</p> | |

Reflexivity: Ability to step outside of one's immediate context to see things objectively. Critical reflection – being able to view things from different perspectives and critique objectively based on an informed positioning.

- What have you learnt personally from engaging in developing assessment practice?
- What would you have done differently in retrospect?
- What could be done better? How would you refine what you have done?
- What are the key learning points you would share with colleagues?

Appendix 3: Critical Reflection

When critically reflecting on your practice:

- The emphasis should be on interpretation rather than description.
- The description needs to be clear and succinct, clarifying your role in the initiative and what the golden nuggets are that you are exploring.
- Do your ideas translate clearly to those outside of your context/discipline? Are they accessible?
- Provide clear evidence to support your analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of events.

What is critical reflection?

“... critical reflection is concerned with the **why, the reasons for, and the consequences of what we do rather than the how or the how to of action**” (Mezirow, 1990) (Waring & Evans, 2015, p. 162).

“Critical thinking is about challenging the validity of *presuppositions* in prior learning, as Mezirow (1990) argues, *premise reflection* more accurately captures what critical reflection is. **Critical reflection addresses the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place**” (Waring & Evans, 2015, p. 163).

“Critical reflection is the process by which adults identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways of acting. Brookfield (1995) adds that part of the critical reflective process is to challenge the prevailing social, political, cultural, or professional ways of acting. Through the process of critical reflection, adults come to interpret and create new knowledge and actions from their ordinary and sometimes extraordinary experiences. Critical reflection blends learning through experience with theoretical and technical learning to form new knowledge constructions and new behaviors or insights.” (Stein, 2000, p. 1)

Reflexivity

“Reflexivity is finding strategies to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others”. (Bolton, 2010, p. 13).

Fook, White, and Gardner's (2006, p. 12) four dimensions of critical reflection:

- (i) a process (cognitive, emotional, experiential) of **examining assumptions** (of many different types and levels) embedded in actions or experience

- (ii) a **linking of these assumptions with many different origins** (personal, emotional, social, cultural, historical, political)
- (iii) a **review and re-evaluation** of these according to relevant criteria (depending on context, purpose, etc.)
- (iv) a **reworking of concepts and practice** based on this re-evaluation

Key resource: (see Chapter 10 on [Critical Reflection in Waring and Evans, 2015](#). *Understanding Pedagogy*, Routledge).

Critical Reflection Tool

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| <p>Factual strand <i>Describe the experience.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened to make you want to amend your assessment practice? • What did you feel like, think and do? • What aspects of assessment did you decide to focus on and why? • What informed what you did? • What were the key moments in developing your approach (positive <i>and</i> negative)? • Why were those moments key? • What were the key outcomes of what you did (expected and unexpected on students and/or lecturers)? • What worked well and why? • What did not work well and why? • Any surprises? (Things you did not expect) |
| <p>Retrospective strand <i>Reflect on the experience as a whole.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In retrospect, what would you change, and why? • What did you learn about yourself? • What did you learn about other people? • What new understandings arose from the experience? |
| <p>Sub-stratum strand <i>Understand your values, beliefs and assumptions.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have you learned about assessment practices within your discipline? • What discipline-specific knowledge, practices and personal experiences were used? • What beliefs and values impacted what you did and your interpretation of others? • What moral and ethical issues were raised for you? • How has the experience impacted your own identity within your discipline/profession? |
| <p>Connective strand <i>Relate what you have learned to other contexts (personal, professional, other).</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the experience influenced the way you might act in the future? • How has the experience influenced the way in which you think about your future? • As a result of the experience, what do you need to find out more about, and why? • Has the experience changed the way you think about assessment? If so, how? |

Adapted from de Cossart and Fish (2005) and Waring and Evans (2015)

Sources

De Cossart, D., & Fish, D. *Cultivating a thinking surgeon: New perspectives on clinical teaching, learning and assessment*. Shrewsbury: TFM Publishing Limited.

Waring M., & Evans, C. (2015). *Understanding pedagogy: Developing a critical approach to teaching and learning*. New York: Routledge.