

ASKe (Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange) is a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) based in the Business School at Oxford Brookes University. It was set up in summer 2005 with a £4.5 million award from HEFCE in recognition of good practice based on pedagogic research into aspects of assessment.

The work of ASKe has been organised into three strands of activity

Strand 1: Replicating proven practice through:

- A pre-assessment intervention which the ASKe team has shown to work. A simple intervention such as a marking workshop prior to undertaking an assessed task can significantly increase students' understanding of the assessment criteria and improve their performance of the task. ASKe has supported the development of this kind of intervention on all Business School courses, as well as in three other Schools (Built Environment, Health and Social Care, and Westminster Institute of Education). This same support is available for the remaining four Schools plus five partner institutions.
- The Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) system which the ASKe team is further developing, in addition to researching effective ways of encouraging and promoting academic integrity.
- The Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programme, long used by the Business School, which ASKe has extended across the School. Support is also offered to help at least three other Schools introduce PAL.

Strand 2: Pioneering evidence-based practice

Appropriate development projects will be funded, both within the Business School and across the whole University. Projects will seek out and support ways to develop and enhance assessment practices.

Strand 3: Cultivating a community of practice

The ASKe team has developed a new, £2 million building on Brookes' Wheatley Campus. This provides a physical environment to support student learning outside structured class time, in which staff and students can meet to develop a shared understanding of academic standards.

But it's more than just a building. The ASKe team argues that only a true community of practice will ensure shared understanding, so ASKe (in conjunction with other parties at Brookes) is also developing the social environment necessary to colonise this physical space.

To find out more about ASKe's work, please contact:
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Adopting a
social constructivist
approach to assessment
in three easy steps!





Do you believe there's more to assessment than passive transmission of standards?

Would you like to actively engage your students in the assessment process?

Would you like to help your students improve their learning for themselves?

If so, why don't you try a social constructivist approach to assessment?

It doesn't take up much time, and it works...

...here's how you do it

1

Understand the theory

- assessment standards, like knowledge, cannot be transmitted passively from teacher to student
- the social-constructivist model states that students must actively engage with every stage of the assessment process so that they fully understand the requirements of the process, and the criteria and standards being applied
- students must especially engage at two key points: with the assessment criteria (before the work is done) and with the assessment feedback (after the work is done)
- research confirms that when students are actively engaged in the assessment process in this way, they will produce better work⁽¹⁾.

(1) Rust, C., O'Donovan, B. & Price, M. (2005), 'A social constructivist assessment process model: how the research literature shows us this could be best practice', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 233-241.

2

Engage students with the assessment criteria

This can be done through:

- marking exercises: students mark anonymised student work from a previous year (or work written by the tutor for this purpose)
- self-assessment: students complete a self-assessment of their work and hand it in with their work. The self-assessment may range from a template with just a few headings to a detailed checklist
- peer-feedback: students work in pairs, threes, or more formal learning-sets to read each other's work and to give feedback against the marking criteria.

3

Engage students with the feedback

This can be done through:

- an exercise to model student behaviour: in groups, students compare feedback on an anonymised student assignment with a later assignment by the same student in which the feedback has been applied
- a template to be submitted with each assignment: students (a) describe what feedback they received on their previous assignments and (b) identify how they have applied that feedback in the current assignment
- designing draft-redraft assignments: students engage with feedback on a first draft in order to produce a better re-draft
- peer-discussion: students work in pairs, threes or more formal learning sets to explain what feedback they have received (or possibly to read each other's feedback) and to discuss how they will apply it in their next assignment.