



Engaging Students in Assessment and Feedback

Mike Laycock
HE Consultant
Co-Chair
Staff and Educational Development Association
(SEDA)

student engagement

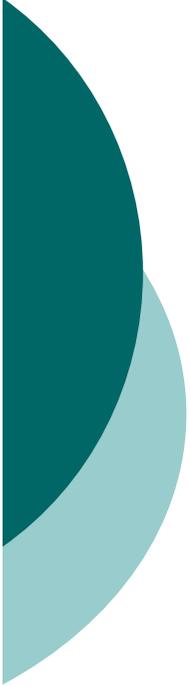
- debate has been on-going for over a decade but given renewed impetus as a consequence of 'vigorous' responses to the UK Government's Higher Education (HE) White Paper
- students as active educational **partners** not passive recipients/ consumers/ customers



QAA Quality Code Expectation (B5)

- HE providers to 'take deliberate steps to engage students both individually and collectively as partners to enhance their learning experience'

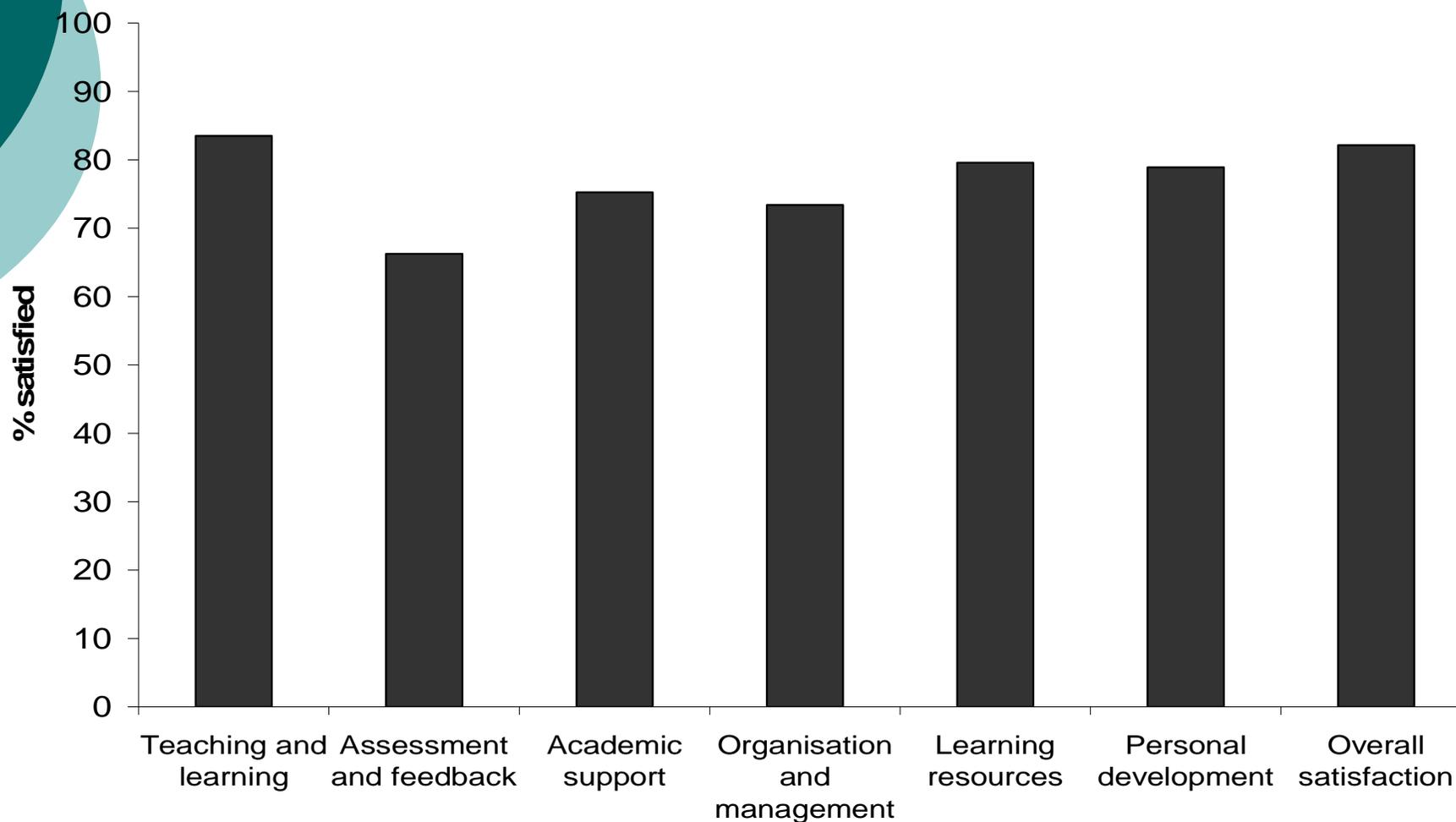


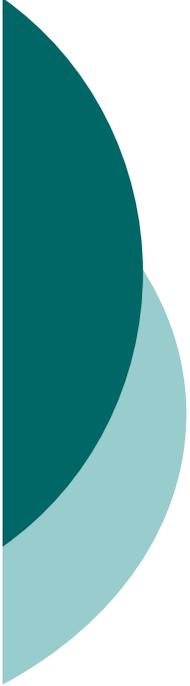


engagement – the HEA

- approach to student engagement considers students as active partners in shaping their learning experiences.
- the NUS and the Academy in joint project to support institutions and students' unions to better engage students in shaping their learning experiences.

National Student Survey 2010 (A&F = 66%)





NSS 2011 – and the NUS

- Satisfaction with 'Assessment and Feedback' increased by 2 per cent to 68 per cent overall.
- 'The NUS Feedback and Assessment campaign toolkit has had a great reception from both students' unions and institutions across the UK and it is heartening to see that it is making a positive impact. We do still however have a long way to go to increase the satisfaction of assessment and feedback to the same level as the other categories in the NSS".

Usman Ali, VP (Higher Education)



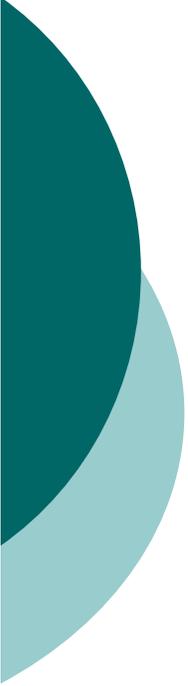
assessment: a key driver of student learning

- 'assessment is at the heart of the student experience' (Brown, S & Knight, P., 1994)
- 'from our students' point of view, assessment always defines the actual curriculum' (Ramsden, P., 1992)
- 'assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students and then as graduates... If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment' (Brown, G. et al, 1997)



staff engagement: partnership or control?

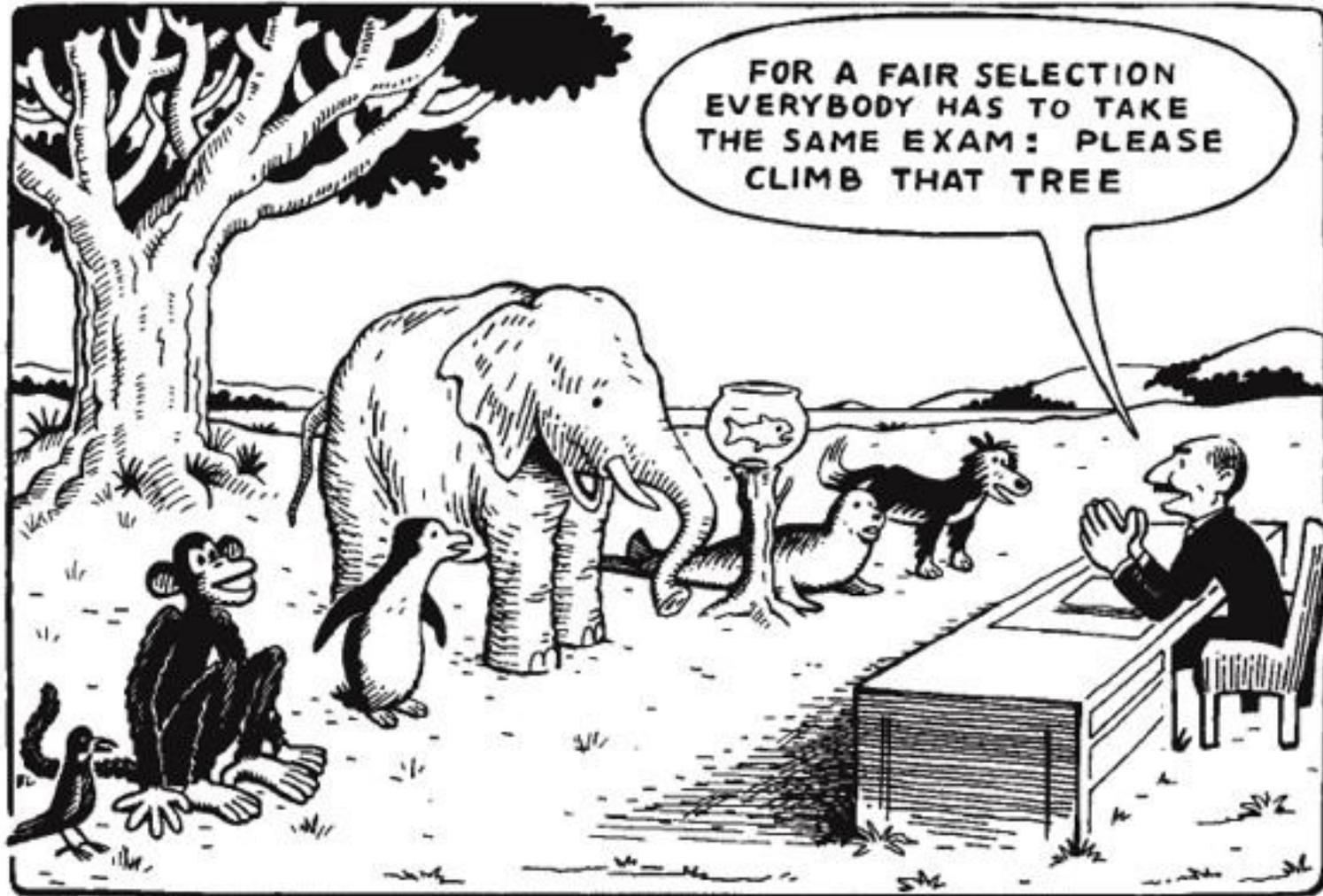
*'Students can, with difficulty, escape from the effects of poor teaching, they **cannot (by definition if they want to graduate) escape the effects of poor assessment.** Assessment acts as a mechanism to control students that is far more pervasive and insidious than most staff would be prepared to acknowledge. It appears to conceal the deficiencies of teaching as much as it does to promote learning. If, as teachers, we want to exert maximum leverage over change in higher education **we must confront the ways in which assessment tends to undermine learning.**' (Boud, 1995, p35)*

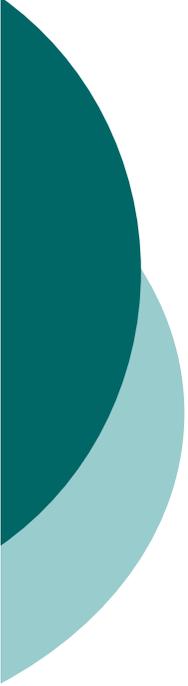


NUS Charter on Feedback and Assessment (some key aspects)

- students should be provided with a variety of assessment methods
- formative assessment should be used throughout the programme
- students should be supported to critique their own work
- programme induction should include information on assessment practices and understanding marking criteria
- students should have access to face-to-face feedback for at least the first piece of assessment each academic year
- feedback should be timely

a variety of assessment methods





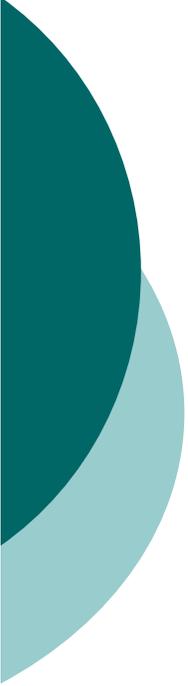
assessment for learning

- extensive research conducted around the world shows that by consistently applying the principles of assessment for learning, we can produce impressive gains both in student engagement and achievement (Black & William, 1998)
 1. shared understandings
 2. the importance of formative assessment



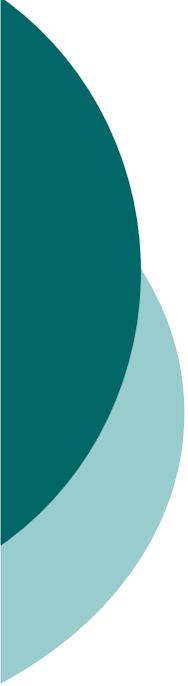
open the 'secret garden' of assessment

- staff share learning outcomes, assessment criteria and achievement targets with students (and each other) and spend some time discussing the criteria with students.
- staff explain how assignments will be marked and what the assessment criteria mean.
- there are opportunities for students to ask questions about the criteria and clarify what they need to do to pass and to do well in the assignment.



students engage in formative and self- and peer assessment and feedback

- enable students actively to use criteria through a combination of:
 1. marking exercises (eg multiple choice questions, short tests in class time)
 2. self-assessment
 3. peer-assessment
 4. peer-feedback
 5. creating and negotiating their own criteria?



example marking exercise for a 'staged assessment'

essays and projects could require two/three staged assessment:

1. literature review: student provides annotated bibliography of texts consulted. Work at this stage could be shared with other students (due week 4).
2. draft essay/project - peer marked and tutor provides comments on a feedback form (due week 8).
3. final essay/project easier to mark because tutor has seen the earlier stages. (due week 12).

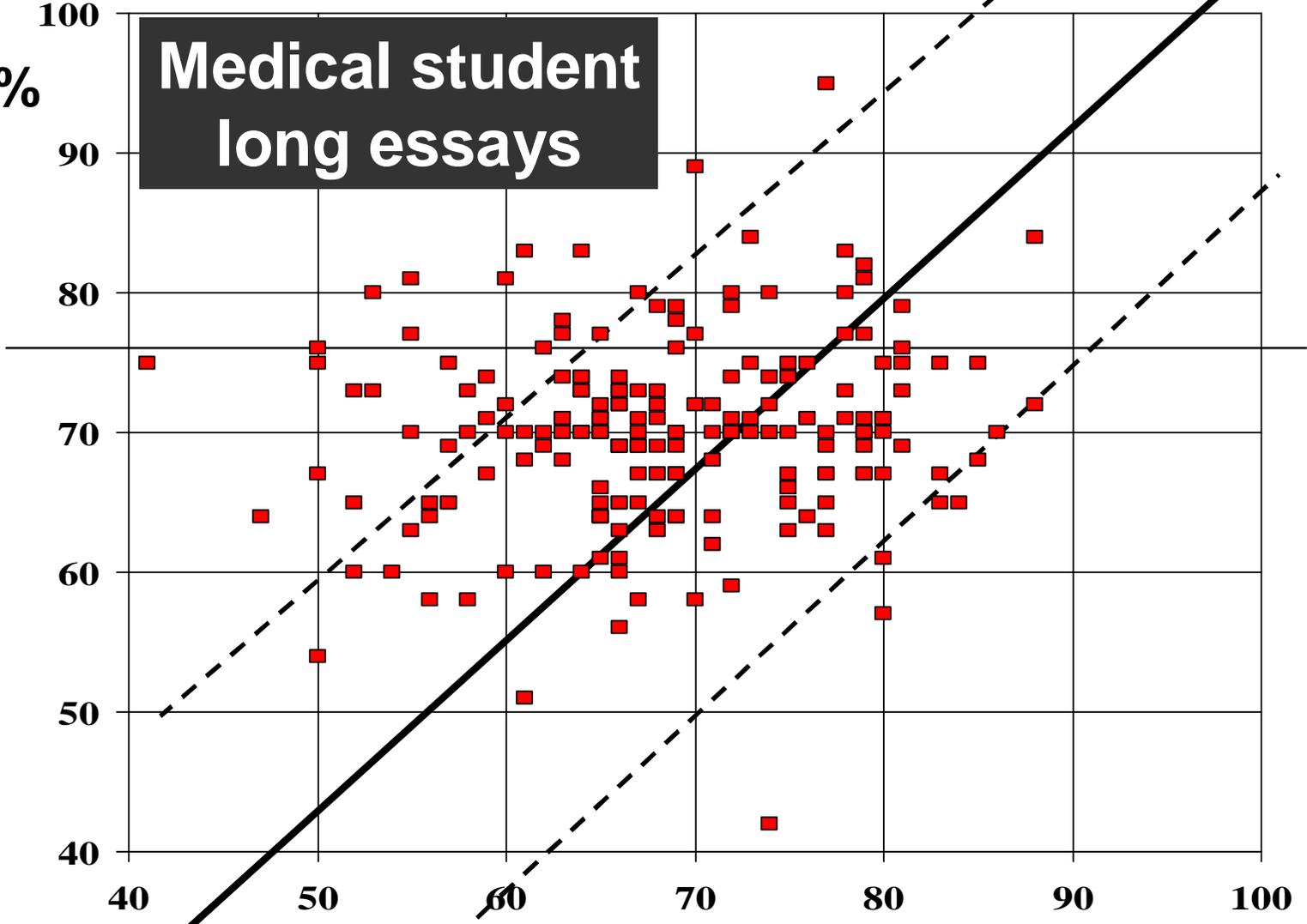


peer assessment of long essays

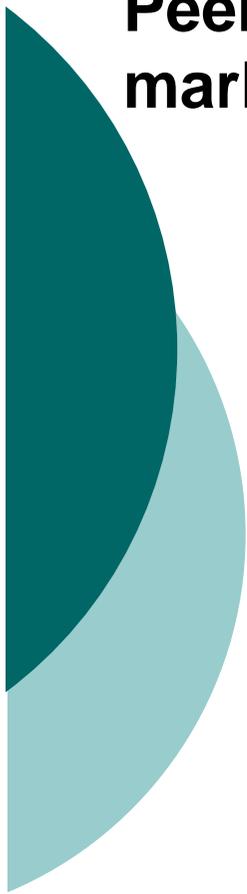
- medical students undertaking 3000 - 4000 word essays
- marking criteria understood by staff and students (properly referenced, critical approach, evidence based; good presentation)
- Staff mark $70.2_{\pm 2.1}\%$
- Student mark $72.6_{\pm 2.2}\%$
- NSD; $P > 0.7$

**Peer
mark %**

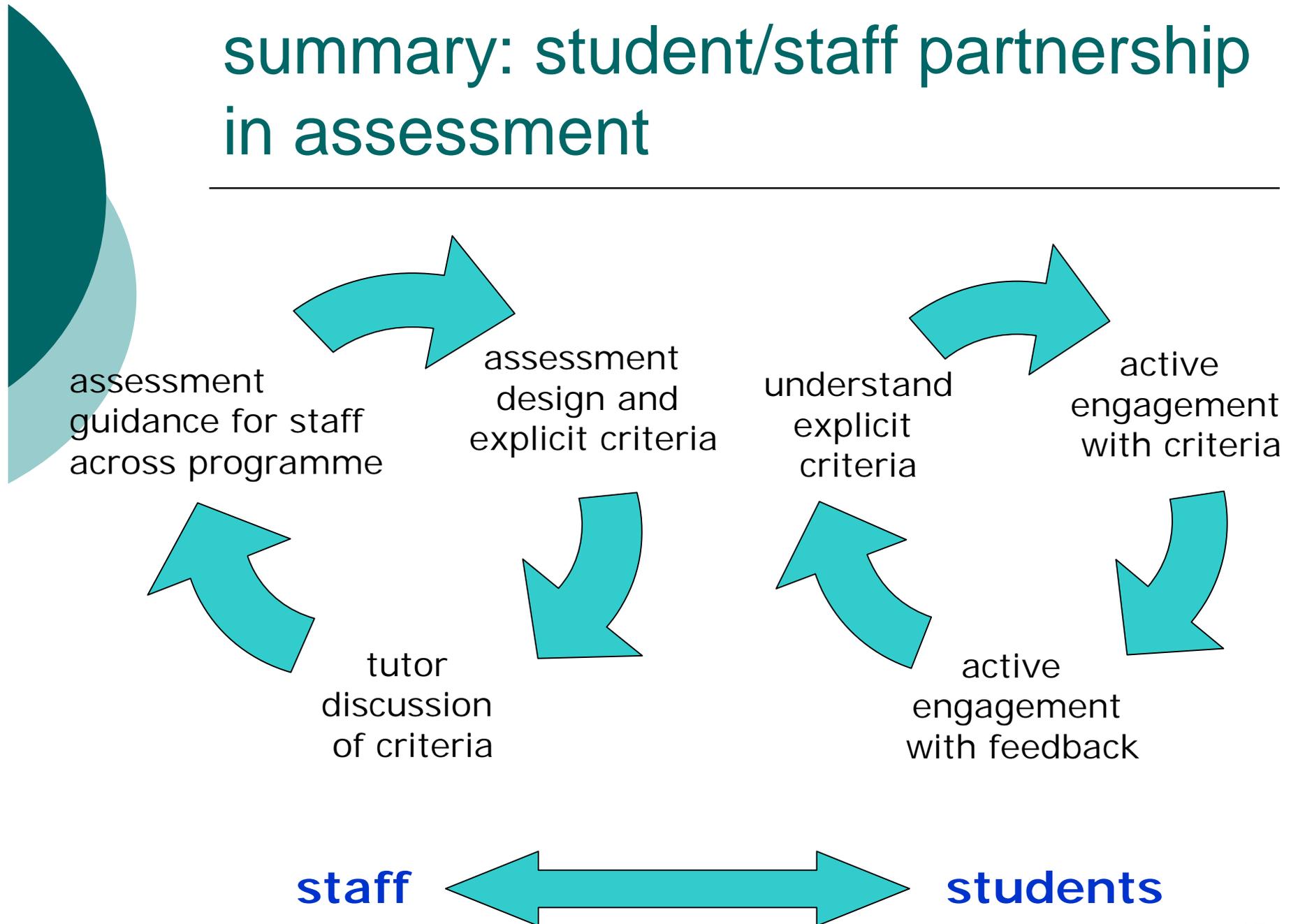
**Medical student
long essays**



**Academic
staff mark %**



summary: student/staff partnership in assessment





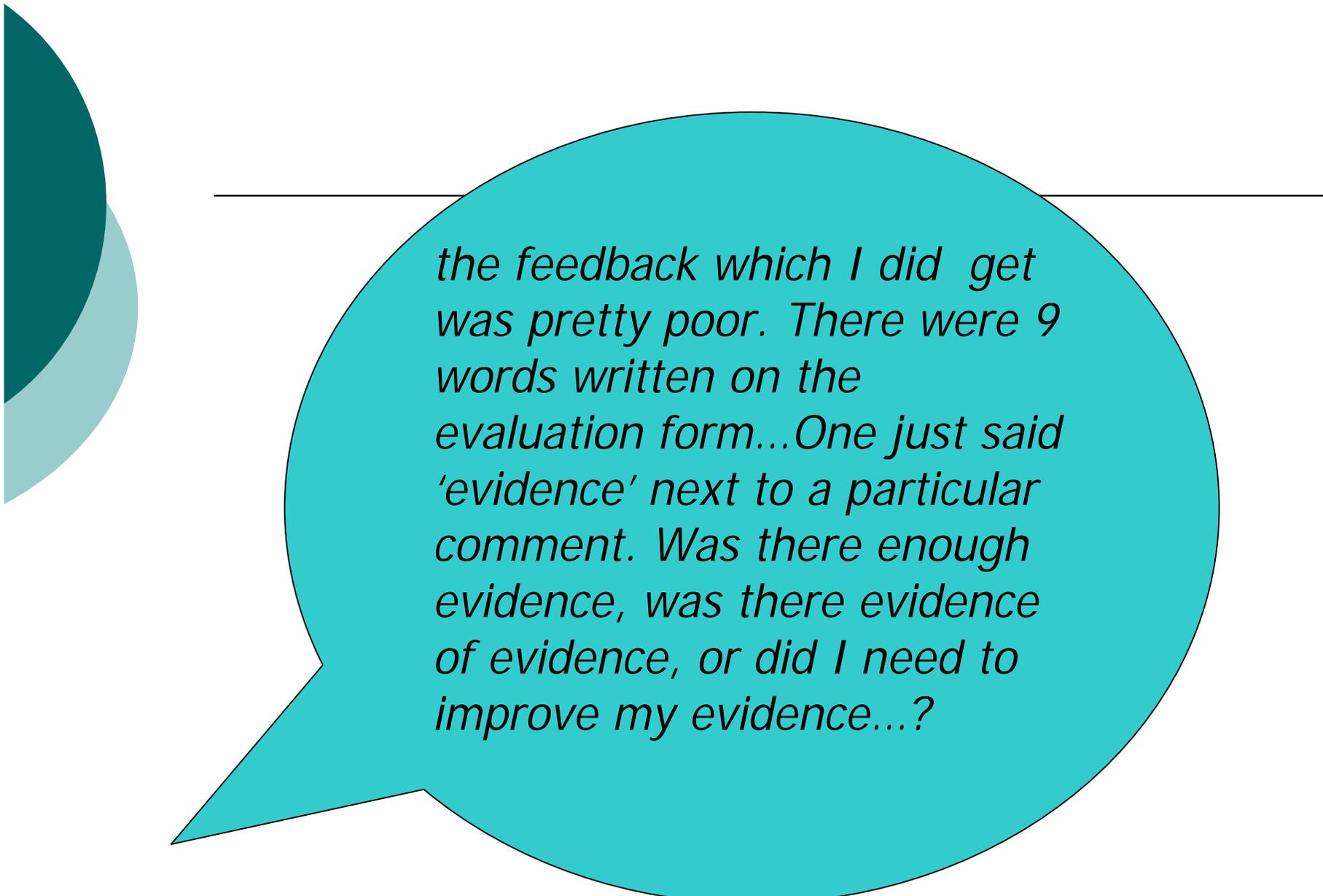
potential of feedback

- 'feedback is the most powerful single influence that makes a difference to student achievement.' (Hattie (1987) - *in a comprehensive review of 87 meta-analyses of studies*)
- 'feedback has extraordinarily large and consistently positive effects on learning compared with other aspects of teaching or other interventions designed to improve learning.' (Black and Wiliam (1998) - *in a comprehensive review of formative assessment*)



but not all good news!

- feedback is often not read at all (Hounsell, 1987) or not understood (Lea and Street, 1998).
- Wotjas (1998) reported: *“Some students threw away the feedback if they disliked the grade, while others seemed concerned only with the final result and did not collect the marked work.”*



the feedback which I did get was pretty poor. There were 9 words written on the evaluation form...One just said 'evidence' next to a particular comment. Was there enough evidence, was there evidence of evidence, or did I need to improve my evidence...?



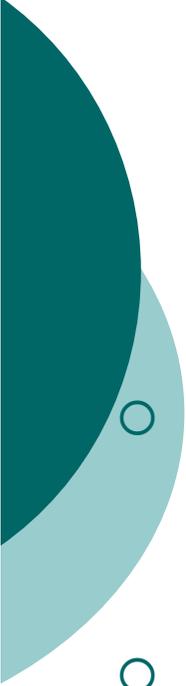
dialogic feedback

- 'it's not enough to improve feedback as a monologue - we must make it a dialogue' (Nicol, 2009)
- feedback should be viewed as a 'continuous dialogue within a cyclical assessment process'. Model covers preparatory guidance, in-task guidance and performance feedback (Beaumont et al 2011, p. 684)
- but dialogic feedback can be resource intensive so review resource allocations



improve feedback – engage students

- model the application of feedback (use previously marked assignments to show how feedback worked)
- encourage the application of feedback - student is required to show how they have used prior feedback to try to improve their work (and marks allocated for this?).



three conceptual shifts

- create a community of assessment practice – an exercise in partnership not an exercise in control.
- we must fully understand that the importance and emotional significance of the assessment experience from the student's perspective is crucial to its effective use.
- self- and peer-assessment need to be seen as essential graduate attributes (ie learning outcomes themselves rather than simply processes).



and finally....

- we must acknowledge that even the most valid and reliable assessment process cannot be regarded as high quality if it causes students to disengage

thankyou