



# **Assessment - a tool for learning in a Pre- sessional setting**

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# Who are we?

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# Outline

- ❖ Background
- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Current study
- ❖ Implementations

# Aims of Pre-sessional Courses

- To help International Students intending to study undergraduate or postgraduate programmes at U o N to develop competence and confidence as users of English in an academic setting.
- **Students**
  - UG primarily Chinese (PRC) intending to study on 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year Top-up programmes (e.g. BAM & Finance & Accounting).
  - PG more diverse; largest group Arab L1 PGT/PGR SS
- **Associate Lecturers**
  - Long-term ALs with a range of backgrounds & experience (CELTA with 3+yrs EFL to DELTA/MA TESOL 5+yrs EAP), working on year-long programme.
  - Short-term engagements for Summer EAP 6-week Programme
- Need to standardise approaches to feedback esp on written assignments



# Situation at U o N

## **PSAE – *Prior to 2014***

- Recruitment of International Students
  - *Offers*
  - *Pre-testing*
  - *Progression*
- Course Content & Assessment
- Evaluation of PSAE:
  - *effect on student motivation*
  - *relevancy to student needs*
  - *progression rates*
  - *stakeholder concerns*

# Situation at U o N

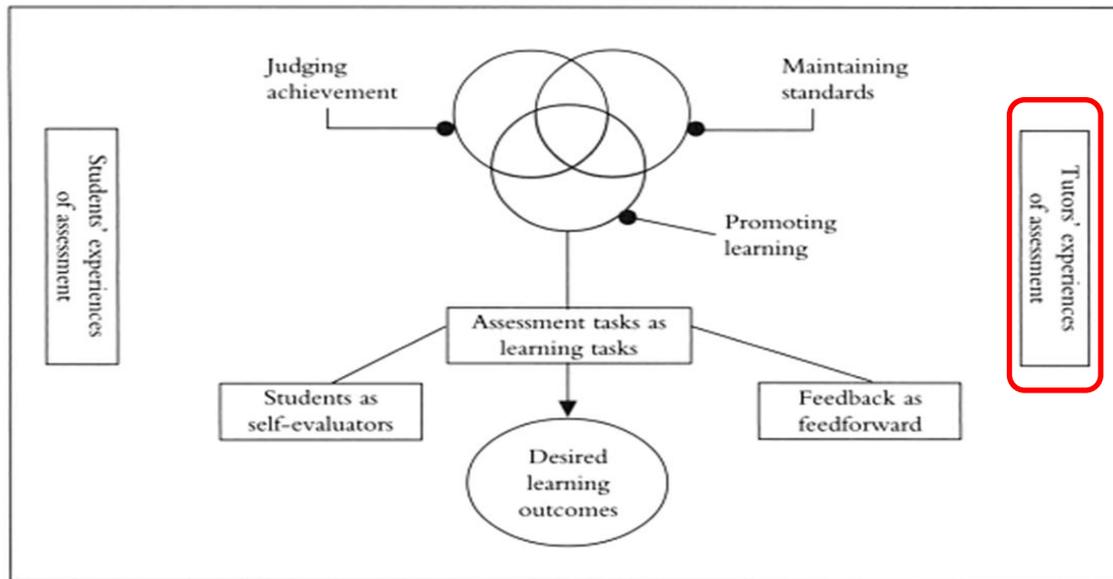
## Redesign – U o N Pre-sessional English Programmes (PEP) 2014 –

- Impulse for redesign:
  - *to create a course that would have some relevance & face validity to the tasks and assessments SS will encounter on their degree programmes.*
- Authentic Texts, Tasks & Teaching Materials
- A Portfolio approach
- Feedback Mechanisms
- Assessment
  - *a range of assessments which aim to equip SS with the skills/tools they need for academic study at UG & PG levels*
  - *a particular emphasis on academic writing; variety of genres & text types.*

# Literature Review

- Learning Oriented Assessment – LOA (Carless 2005, 2007; Carless, Joughin, Liu et al. 2006; Joughin 2009)
- In the language education sector, there is an increasing demand for changing the attitude towards assessment (Green, 2014)
- “effective assessment practice should focus on enhancing student learning processes” (Carless, 2014, p2)
- Learning Oriented Language Assessment – LOLA (Green & Hamp-Lyons, 2014, 2015)

# Literature Review



A consolidated framework of learning-oriented assessment (Carless *et al*, 2006, p.14)

# Research Questions

- 1.To what extent do pre-sessional teachers support the use of learning-oriented assessment in the department? Why or why not do they support it?
- 2.To what extent do assessments used in pre-sessional course reflect the concept?
- 3.What are the challenges they have faced?
- 4.How can learning-oriented assessment be implemented?



# Research Method

Method: Focused group

Participants: 5 out of 7 Pre-sessional teachers

Data: notes from participants and facilitator

Analysis: themes emerged from the notes and were related to the research questions

# Results (1)

**To what extent do pre-sessional teachers support the use of learning-oriented assessment in the department? Why or why not do they support?**

- *Yes. Agree with LOA because of serves the purposes of the desired outcome learning. (T1)*
  - *Yes. It covers plenty of aspects in learning and teaching. I believe it works well. (T2)*
  - *I agree with LOA with the caveat that there should be teacher input/monitoring phase. LOA addresses many of the features that allows and creates success*
  - *Student-centred, self-directed approach learning. It promotes autonomy which*
  - *Yes. Need to maintain standard. Otherwise problems with facing validity if it's to university, won't be motivated to study. Feedback is necessary. Otherwise, students won't know how they are doing or can't start next course. (T5)*
- **Consistent with Carless (2014, p2)**  
“effective assessment practice should focus on enhancing student learning processes”

## Results (2)

### To what extent do assessments used in pre-sessional course reflect

- *All concepts are addressed at some point. Too much written work has diluted the learning experience however. (T3)*
  - *There is insufficient time to give feedback plus no time for students to discuss their work on assignments. (T1)*
  - *Formative assessment alone is not enough. If combined with an element of summative assessment it is more effective in the long run. (T4)*
  - *No. students are not deciding what they need to learn or focus on. Not really learning for themselves it is more institution-oriented. Students do assessments because they have to. (T5)*
- **Feedback:** quantity and timing of feedback; quality; student response to feedback (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004)
  - **Formative or summative or both:** learning-oriented assessment encompasses both of these assessment functions (Carless, 2006)

## Results (3)

### What are the challenges they have faced?

- *Peer evaluation is fine plus helpful for some things, eg. presentations. However, it is inappropriate for written work. Fine to pick out the good elements but not to say they will correct incorrectly. (T1)*
- *Peer evaluation. Not certain if it is useful for all students as some of them do not want to be evaluated. (T3)*
- *Self-evaluation. Students at lower ability 'evaluating' students of higher ability students; cultural reasons; expectation of teacher evaluation at a course they are not interested in. (T2)*
- *Student level, background and culture. (T4)*
- *Do students have a high enough level to evaluate other students? it could be a challenge. Students could lose face and become embarrassed. Need to be informed that it is not a requirement. Time-consuming. Triangulation: students (self), peer, teacher*
- *Self-evaluation, not certain as some student want to be evaluated by their teacher. Some are not interested in feedback. (T2)*

### Peer-assessment or self-evaluation

Cheng & Warren (2005), Orsmond and Merry (1996) reported students felt neither comfortable nor confident evaluating their peers due to their own perception of inability. Brown (2004) identified subjectivity as the primary weakness.



# Implementation and Benefits

How can LOA be effectively implemented?    What are the potential benefits of LOA?

- **Teachers**
- **Students**
- **Institution**

# Implementation and Benefits : Teachers

The key issue is that our teachers are to provide feedback that is timely, comprehensible, promotes self awareness and focuses on learning rather than results.

- **Regular staff development sessions/ comprehensive induction sessions-** *staff are trained on how to give effective feedback, different methods of feedback, standardised marking*
- **Observations** – *formal and peer observations, pre and post meetings*
- **Time** – *feedback sessions written into the SOW, regular opportunities for tutorials*
- **The Type of Assessment-** *Portfolios, Multi-stage assignments, Drafts, Poster Presentations, Authentic, Co-operative, Continuous etc.*

**Benefits** – *Teachers become more skilled, more confident and more secure that they have the time, the ability and the opportunity to provide feedback.*

# Implementation and Benefits : Students

The two key issues here are that students develop the ability to self evaluate and are encouraged to engage with feedback.

- **Transparency of Criteria-** *Immediately open dialogue about the assessment process(s) (Carless, 2014), providing students with accessible marking criteria with which can engage, using examples, peer feedback, student input, self evaluation*
- **Engagement in feedback** – *providing constructive feedback, correction codes, student action plans, drafts, monitoring how students have acted on feedback, encouraging reflection> self evaluation*
- **The Type of Assessment-** *Portfolios, Multi-stage assignments, Drafts, Poster Presentations, Authentic, Co-operative, Continuous etc.*

**Benefits** – *students are continually developing with each assessment, developing the ability to self evaluate thus becoming autonomous learners, increased motivation, better prepared<sup>16</sup> for academic study*

# Implementation and Benefits : The Institution

The key point to recognise is that not only the pre-sessional course benefits from the use of LOA, but the institution as a whole can benefit.

- **Student Progression** – *students who successfully complete the pre-sessional course will enter an academic degree. They will be able to bring and further develop their skills of self-evaluation and ability to engage in feedback on to their respective courses.*
- **Departmental Relations** – *the English Language Dept. is in constant contact with the other departments in the university. If successful in our implementation of LOA, we will be able to advise and train those outside of department in the techniques and processes we use.*

**Benefits-** *Awareness of and the ability to provide effective feedback is raised throughout the institution. Students of all levels and disciplines develop the ability to self evaluate and engage in feedback thus creating the provision for higher achievement within the student body as a whole.*

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