

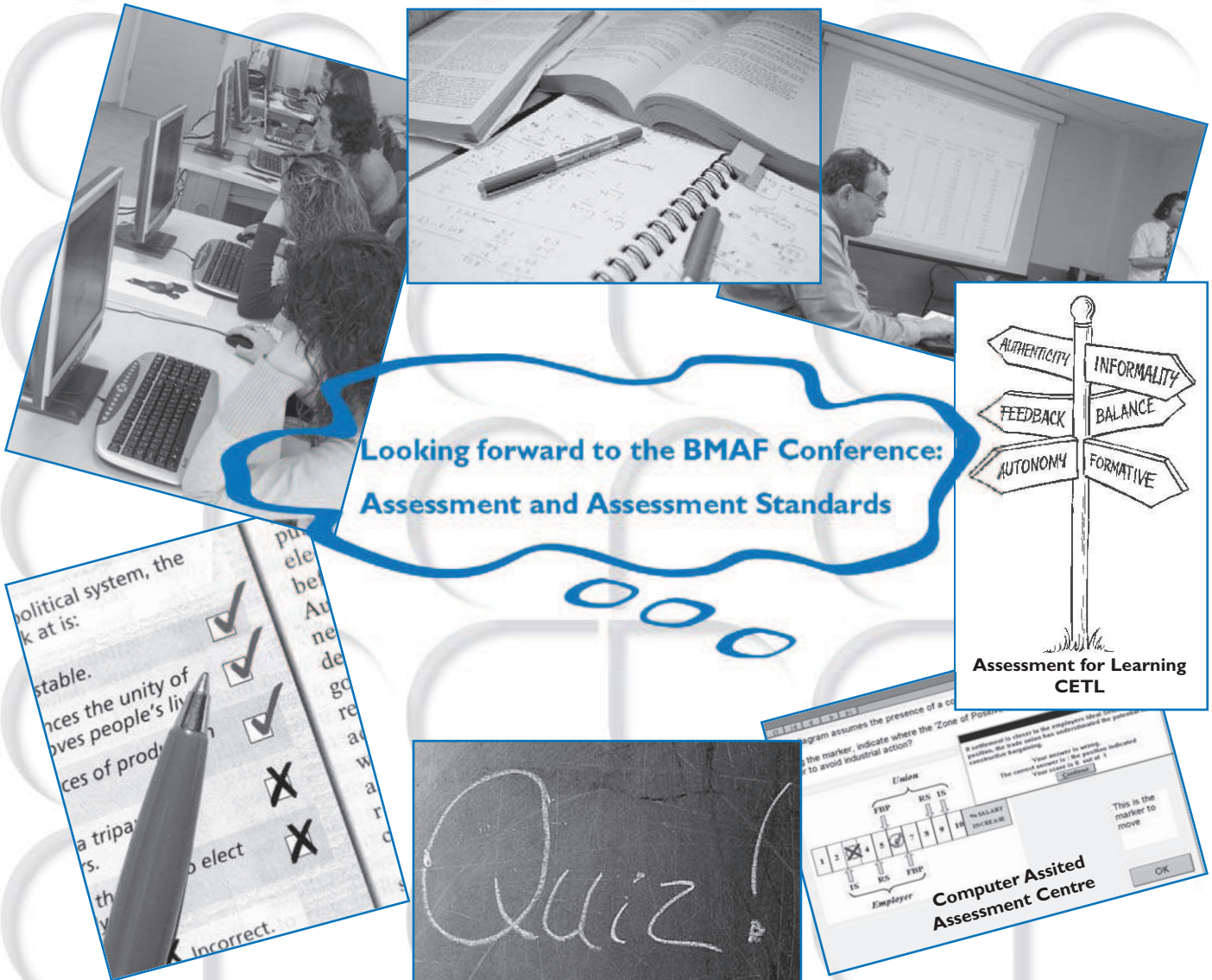


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Looking forward to the BMAF Conference:
Assessment and Assessment Standards



Assessment for Learning
CETL

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Formative aspects of summative assessment

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“Setting our own assessment criteria sounds great in theory,” remarked one of the students ruefully, “but there’s a risk we’ll set assessment criteria that don’t challenge us.”

We were discussing summative assessment criteria as a part of the HEA BMAF-funded Teaching Research and Development project that I’m doing at London South Bank University this year. I was surprised and pleased by the comment, which seemed to indicate that the project is already seeing worthwhile results.

The project is focused on formative aspects of summative assessment and is being undertaken with students on the MBA Managing Projects elective unit. The aim is to investigate whether students can, with practice, become more skilled at evaluating their own and others’ points of view, especially when evaluation criteria are emergent rather than given. This is widely regarded as a key 21st century graduate attribute. As Boud and Falchikov (2006) noted, learning outcomes are rarely specified explicitly in the workplace. Moreover:

What is required of the learner is embedded in a professional practice ... Before learning can even commence there is a need for learners to identify for themselves what they need to learn, taking into account a range of contextual factors, and to judge what counts as good work. (p. 404)

It is also a critical aspect of managing innovation or organisational change projects in a context of increasingly diverse, if not incommensurable, stakeholder interests.

The “Managing Projects” unit provides an innovative “authentic assessment” group assignment grounded in a real world project within which students can demonstrate their developing knowledge and skills (Mueller, 2008). It also provides for a form of self and peer assessment naturalised as ongoing project progress reports as well as a post-project “lessons learned” review (Kerth,

2000). Recent cohorts have planned a summer ski jump at Battersea (yes, it actually happened!), an open air food festival on London Bridge and, this academic year, a winter street market.

The research has a longitudinal, repeated measures design with three interventions and simple summative assessments of their own and other groups’ weekly presentations by individual students. These repeated measures are supplemented by a pre- and post-‘transfer of training’ test at the beginning and end of the unit. Class sessions are being audio and video-recorded for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Work to date has demonstrated that the approach is feasible and capable of supporting the research aims. More to the point, however, is the enhanced student engagement that comes with participation in a worthwhile and memorable learning experience that makes visible much of the largely tacit knowledge and skills required for managing projects.

2009 - 10
BMAF Grant
Project

References

- Boud, D., & Falchikov, N. (Eds) (2006). *Aligning assessment with long-term learning. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31 (4), 399-413.
- Kerth, N. (2000). *Project retrospectives: A handbook for team reviews*. New York: Dorset House.
- Mueller, J. (2008). *Authentic assessment toolbox*. Retrieved May 13, 2009, from <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/index.htm>

Student flyer for the “Winter Big 1” street market and festival in the fictional London Borough of Cross River

