Key Concepts Underpinning EAT: Equity, Agency, Transparency

EAT is a research-informed assessment framework underpinned by a critical pedagogy that requires rigorous evaluation of the extent to which assessment promotes equal access and equal opportunities to do well. Key concepts captured within this research-informed framework include:

- **Inclusive** – includes understanding of individual differences
- **Holistic** – experience of the student learning journey in its entirety
- **Agentic in promoting learner ownership of assessment.**
- **Self-regulatory**
- **Sustainable** – of value now and in the future – manageable -
- **Sensitive to context**
- **Partnership** and the importance of **shared beliefs and values** between academics and students
- **Meaningful learning experiences** that promote a deep approach to learning **that is authentic and relevant**
- **Integrative** – interconnected

Summary of constructs underpinning EAT from EAT (2022)

Research-informed refers to the **application of research to assessment practice in a way that is meaningful, relevant, and sustainable**; it requires: (i) discernment in evaluating the quality of research, (ii) an appreciation and understanding of context, and (iii) ability to carry out rigorous research in practice to support enhanced understandings of effective assessment.

A **critical pedagogy** underpins the EAT approach to ensure ongoing consideration of who is ad/disadvantaged by particular assessment decisions. Do all students have equal access and equal opportunities to do well? Are the decisions we make informed by critical evaluation of the data and comprehensive approaches to ensure the voices of all participants are captured?

Evaluation of practice needs to be rigorous and dynamic.

Rigorous in ensuring we are:

- **measuring what we value** rather than valuing what is easy to measure (Biesta, 2010)

- **ensuring fidelity to underpinning principles of good practice.**

- considering the **relative impact of initiatives in relation to reach** (who we are targeting in our assessment interventions), and effectiveness in terms of the value of a specific approach in **impacting outcomes** (how many students/lecturers impacted, effect sizes –degree of impact- does it make a significant difference or is it inconsequential?), **cost effectiveness** (amount of time and resource to effect change and sustainability of initiatives), and **transferability** (how easy to adapt and apply initiatives to different contexts).

Dynamic in ensuring that there is:

ongoing evaluation of the quality of assessment so that we can impact learning in the moment. In **focusing on process,** and **sharing data with students,** there are considerable opportunities to demonstrate *with* students why certain approaches to assessment may have more favourable outcomes. We need to **explore the process and not just the outcomes of assessment feedback practices**, and ensure the time spent on specific assessment activities is justified.
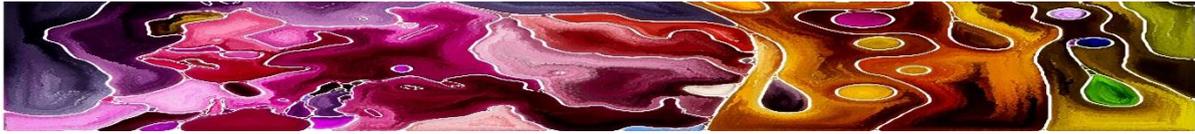
Inclusive Assessment needs to provide all learners **with equal access to assessment**, **and equal opportunities to do well**, valuing diversity and enabling participation. **Inclusion needs to be integral to assessment with reasonable adjustments built into assessment design from the outset..** Inclusive assessment highlights the importance of:

- **Awareness of the nature of a cohort:** their dispositions and starting points: what learners can do at point of access, where gaps in knowledge and skills are, and issues impacting access to assessment.
- **Making roles in assessment explicit** by clarifying the role of the student in the process from the outset and attending to the relevance of assessment and student ownership of it; engagement is key.
- **Ensuring physical access to resources** (alternative formats of information and utilisation of appropriate assistive technologies).
- **Addressing cognitive access needs** (ensuring information is clear, accessible, and explicit; examples of key concepts and requirements are provided).
- **Ensuring the design of assessment allows all to do well** (tasks do not prejudice certain students and groups of students with specific characteristics).
- **Reasonable adjustments are embedded in assessment design from the outset** so students are clear about what the options are, and how they can meet the requirements; potential barriers have been mapped and addressed.
- **Organisation of resources enable flexibility** (information is provided in good time so students can manage their time effectively, and can navigate online resources in ways that suit them, a variety of resources are provided to exemplify key points).
- **Appropriate support and challenge are provided** (scaffolding of assessment includes providing opportunities for students to test their understanding, using focused feedback at appropriate points to support learning). Challenge implies setting meaningful assessment tasks and encouraging student to take ownership of the assessment process through supporting development of their self-regulatory skills.
- **Choice is managed carefully** to ensure coherence of programme experiences, supporting students to make informed choices, and ensuring that the nature of assessment is robust in being the most appropriate mode of assessment to enable students to demonstrate how they have met the required learning outcomes and at the necessary standard.

Holistic involves consideration of the **whole experience of the learner** within a programme and beyond the discipline, and across the entirety of the student lifecycle – transitions in, through and beyond HE. This includes how students' (i**) transition across different modules and units and make sense of them**, (ii) **engage in academic and social opportunities** with others and wider communities to develop their understandings of assessment, (iii) how **assessments bring personal and academic worlds** together to support learning.

Agentic engagement involves **students' meaningful engagement with, and leadership of their learning**. It includes learner **understanding of the assessment environment** and how best to use it to meet needs, and also **how learners can effect change in learning environments to make things work better for them (Reeve, 2013)** . It includes students' self-advocacy, the ability to have one's needs realised but in the context of understanding their role in assessment as **active contributors** and not just recipients of **the assessment experience**; shared advocacy with their programme teams.

Managing assessment contexts is linked to **knowledge of context, self-belief, perceptions of one's role in assessment, and confidence to engage in discourse** with peers and academics, and the **willingness to assume ownership of assessment**.

Agentic engagement is linked to notions of **self-determination** (the ability to make decisions for oneself) (Accardo, et al., 2019), and **self-advocacy** in knowing one's own needs and rights, and being able to pursue and get support to be able to function independently (Pfeifer et al. 2021).

Effective self-regulation refers to learners' abilities to **manage the requirements of a task** to include **accurate assessment of task requirements**, the setting of **appropriate goals, choosing appropriate strategies** to master a task, **ongoing review and evaluation** of performance to enhance achievement of goals, **maintaining motivation,** and **accurate reflection** on the degree to which aims have been met.

Self-regulation encompasses **metacognitive, cognitive, and emotional strategies** used by learners to manage learning. **Metacognition** denotes an ability to understand one's own learning processes; **Cognition** an ability to utilise cognitive strategies to master a task, and **Emotional Regulation**, the ability to manage one's emotions at all stages in completion of a learning task.

Self-regulation skills are strongly related to outcomes (Bembenutty, While, & Vélez, 2015; Dent & Koenka, 2016; Panadero, 2017): '*Students' strategies for learning and exam preparation, for effort regulation, and goal-setting demonstrate stronger relationships with achievement than their personalities or personal backgrounds*' (Schneider & Preckel, 2017, p. 595).

The EAT framework draws attention to the importance of **students' discriminatory use of strategies in terms of appropriateness and quality of strategy use** (Dinsmore, 2017). Over-direction whereby students are not encouraged to take responsibility for their learning can lead to negative self-regulatory strategies such as minimum effort regulation, where for example, students become increasingly reliant on lecturer input, and subsequently regulate their learning by realising that they need to do less to achieve goals (Evans et al., 2019); Evans et al., 2021).

Self-regulation requires support from knowledgeable others as part of co-regulation. Shared regulation refers to teams having shared goals and working together to realise goals.

For further information on self-regulatory approaches to assessment – see **Evans et al, 2021).**

Evans, C. et al. (2021). *A self-regulatory approach to assessment.* Cardiff University and inclusive he.org
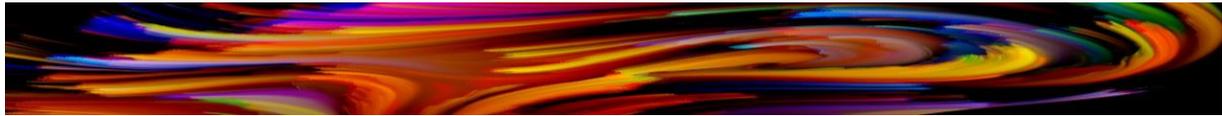
Sustainability from efficiency and quality perspectives includes:

- making **assessment design manageable** for students and staff.

- embedding **assessment initiatives within policy and practice.**

- developing **students' self-regulatory skills** so that they can manage assessment for themselves and be discerning in their use of strategies (ability to choose the right strategies and use them well) beyond the immediate assessment point

- the **relative value of what we ask students to do in the name of assessment:**

  What value do assessment tasks have to the individual and wider community beyond the immediate assessment point?
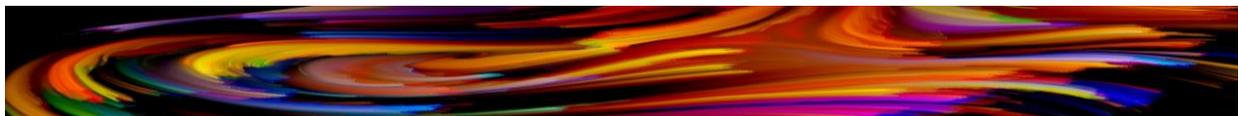
Sensitive to context includes consideration of **individual and contextual factors** in which assessment operates (See Evans & Waring, 2021).

How do we ensure sensitivity to **how learners experience assessment**, and **support individuals to manage their learning** (to recognise cues to support them, engage in networks, understand the inferences and meanings of disciplinary cultures)**?**

This requires acknowledgement of the fact that **individuals' perceptions of assessment environments are personally constructed**, how individuals process and make sense of information is variable.

How we do we **collect information on students' lived experiences** of the assessment context to inform how we design assessment and **how do we work with students to demonstrate the impact of using specific strategies on outcomes**?

Student-staff partnership is integral to engagement. **How students and academics perceive their roles in assessment feedback matters**. Lecturers' beliefs about student capacity to take responsibility for assessment, their confidence in working with students in partnership, and students' potential lack of experience of driving assessment as co-partners are all areas that need consideration. Working in partnership requires **high levels of trust, confidence, and time in building collaborative partnerships**. The power dynamic in assessment is also challenging and role boundaries and limits of influence need to be explicit.

Shared beliefs and values about the purposes of assessment impact outcomes. EAT highlights the importance of making the tacit explicit in making the rationale underpinning assessment decisions clear to all and encouraging open debate around **cultures of assessment and what is perceived as the right way(s) to do things and why, whose voice matters?**

Understanding student and lecturer **conceptions of assessment: how they understand the purposes of assessment and their roles within it is important to explore from the outset.**

Of critical importance is developing shared understanding of goals, and facilitating genuine opportunities to enable ongoing dialogue about the nature of assessment and individual responsibilities within this.

Meaningful learning experiences emphasize a **deep approach** to learning.

A deep approach to learning implies the need to **understand for oneself;** getting to grips with the meanings underpinning concepts and wanting to develop and contribute to knowledge generation.

A deep approach involves the discriminatory use of time (efficiency) and ability to filter information effectively and to read the requirements of a context well. It also refers to **knowing what strategies to use and how to use them well**; this includes use of strategic approaches and surface approaches to learning where they are appropriate to the requirements of a task.

A deep approach requires getting **underneath a subject to know what it is to think, act and be in a discipline; knowing effective discipline/professional networks and how to contribute to them and utilise them to best effect**.

A deep approach also refers to being able to **apply and adapt ideas to new contexts** implying **high levels of automation of key approaches and creativity in evolving ideas.**

In summary, **key elements of a deep approach** include:

- **quality of thinking** and what it is to think, act and be in a discipline / profession.

- **relevance of learning to future contexts** – currency of what is being assessed
    - **making connections** across learning experiences and achieving learning at the highest cognitive level (Durrant & Hartman, 2014).
    - **internalisation of learning -** how an individual constructs new meanings – and brings fresh interpretations of ideas.
    - **discriminating in want we want students to focus their time** on (i.e., on developing deeper insights and focusing on quality).

Integrative: means **considering how all elements of assessment work together**, and as part of this, explores the limitations in looking at assessment components in isolation given the strong interconnectivity of them.

The EAT framework highlights three dimensions: Assessment Literacy, Assessment Feedback and Assessment Design. All these elements are inextricably linked to each other. A key exercise is taking one dimension and/or subdimension and thinking how it permeates all other areas.

Example: **Understanding what is good and how to achieve it (Assessment Literacy 1) impacts how students:**

AL2: negotiate different assessment tasks across a programme
AL3: see their role in assessment
AL4: interpret good within the discipline

AF1: make sense of feedback
AF2: make use of early formative assessment opportunities
AF3: engage with other students to support their learning and that of others
AF4: evaluate the quality of their own work

AD1: make sense of academic conventions and requirements
AD2; commit to deep approaches to learning
AD3: navigate resources and make use of sources of support
AD4: contribute to and feedback on assessment design

References

Accardo, A. L., Bean, K., Cook, B., Gillies, A., Edgington, R., Kuder, S. J., & Bomgardner, E. M. (2019). College access, success and equity for students on the autism spectrum. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *49*(12), 4877–4890. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04205-8

Bembenutty H., White, M. C., & Vélez, M. R. (2015). Self-regulated learning and development in teacher preparation training, In Bembenutty H., White M., & Vélez, M. (eds.) *Developing self-regulation of learning and teaching skills among teacher candidates* (9-28). SpringerBriefs in Education: doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9950-8_2

Dent, A.L., Koenka, A.C. (2016). The relation between self-regulated learning and academic achievement across childhood and adolescence: A meta-analysis. *Educ Psychol Rev* , 28, 425–474.

Durrant, K. L. & Hartman, T. P. V. (2014). The integrative learning value of field courses. *Journal of Biological Education*, 49 (4), 385-400.

Evans, C., with S. Rutherford, F. Vieira, and Erasmus+ team (2021). *A self-regulatory approach to assessment.* Cardiff: Cardiff University; inclusivehe.org

Evans C., & Waring, M. (2021). Enhancing students' assessment feedback skills within higher education. In L-f. Zhang (Eds.). *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology* (pp. 451-477), Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.932

Panadero, E. (2017). A review of self-regulated Learning: Six models and four directions for research. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8* https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00422

Pfeifer, M. A., Reiter, E. M., Cordero, J. J., & Stanton, J. D. (2021). Inside and out: factors that support and hinder the self-advocacy of undergraduates with ADHD and/or specific learning disabilities in STEM. *CBE—Life Sciences Education, 20*(ar17), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-06-0107

Reeve, M. (2013). How students create motivationally supportive learning environments for themselves: The concept of agentic engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 105(3), 579–595.doi: 10.1037/a0032690

Schneider, M., & Preckel. F. (2017). Variables associated with achievement in higher education: A systematic review of meta-analyses. *Psychol Bull* 143 (6): 565-600. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000098