Talking about the elephant in the room: Improving fundamental assessment practices

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Abstract

This paper reports on an institution-wide strategy to improve first year assessment practices. Assessment is central to the student experience and to informing their developing conceptions of themselves as students. Despite this central importance, much national and international literature raises questions about the fitness-for-purpose of assessment practices in higher education. The reported strategy was developed in response to analysis of student feedback, which suggested, like the literature, substantial opportunity for improvement. Student feedback on their assessment experience was validated by an audit of first session assessment and used to inform the strategy. A significant improvement in quantitative and qualitative measures of student satisfaction across routine data sources is provided to demonstrate impact. This supports a conclusion that the first year student experience can be impacted by the systemic application of a small number of fundamental good practice assessment strategies which are outlined.

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