



# APT 2021

19<sup>th</sup> Academic Practice and Technology Conference (APT2021)  
Co-hosted online by the London School of Economics & Political Science,  
Imperial College London and University College London.

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021

<b>Session Start Time</b>	10:30
<b>Breakout Room</b>	5
<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Digital assessment – an Alexander Pope or Star Trek moment?
Presenters (lead & co-presenters)	Simon Walker Simon Walker Grayson Jones, Joanne Moles, Steve Rowett
Institution	UCL
Format	Research paper or work in progress
Abstract	Digital assessment is seen as one of the ‘final frontiers’ in Higher Education- its borderlands throw up new innovations, disruptions, benefits and challenges. UCL’s pivot to online teaching in April 20/21 created the conditions for adopting a cross-university ‘digital first’ approach to assessment. This short panel discussion will touch upon the core activities undertaken for the successful procurement and implementation of a modern, dedicated digital assessment platform that was rolled out for all 18,000 centrally managed exams in April 2021. It will explore some of the immediate and potential benefits and challenges, including the resourcing and training aspects required to ensure success at scale, and consider some cultural and policy developments required for a shift to a modern approach to assessment.
Session Description	UCL took the decision to move to online assessment in March 2020 and conduct all its assessments remotely. Instead of the 87,000 face to face invigilated exams that had traditionally taken place using an external venue (the London Excel conference centre) over 5 weeks, pass/fail capstone assessments for all first-year students were introduced and in large part, traditional F2F exams for other years were replaced with 24 hour timed exams using Moodle. 2020 witnessed a significant reduction in exams. In contrast, work on support for digital assessment disproportionately accelerated throughout 2020/21. Prior to March, we had been reviewing the role of digital assessment – it wasn’t a burning platform for UCL although, like the rest of the sector, we had been

hearing dissenting students' voice about handwritten exams (and the need for handwriting practice to develop the appropriate muscles) for many years.

Capitalising on the unique opportunity that the lockdown provided for (a) solving immediate problems of robust remote assessment and (b) exploring a new vision of assessment over the next 5-10 years, a number of things were set in motion. These included creating a temporary operating model, establishing up governance structure and a project board to agree plans and comms, specification gathering and testing, piloting and procuring an end-to-end digital assessment platform for all centrally- managed exams. Over the course of this work, we have started to scope out some of the potential innovations (opportunities for alternative , authentic and modern assessment, data integration) as well as challenges (space, infrastructure, TOMs, proctoring, trust based adaptive systems, development of the marker and moderator experience, data integration) Our presentation will be in the form of a panel with questions asked to illicit some of these issues, which we will open up to the audience to maximise interaction and enjoyment.



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<b>Session Start Time</b>	10:30
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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	The Dream Team: Designing fairer group assessments
Presenters (lead & co-presenters)	Dr Jim Turner Jack Ennis, Will Moindrot, Dr Tünde Varga-Atkins
Institution	Liverpool John Moores University, Newcastle University and University of Liverpool
Format	Research paper or work in progress
Abstract	Group work has become a key element of a degree programme design and has the potential to improve student engagement, performance, marks, and retention, however, this potential is lost if the assessment design is not seen as fair (Gibbs, 2009, Meijer et al., 2020). Technology offers some answers but is this a 'sticking plaster' over the complexities of teaching practice, assessment design, and student perception. Three UK institutions (Universities of Liverpool, Newcastle, and Liverpool John Moores) independently instigated the same digital peer evaluation of group work platform (Buddycheck) to address such challenges. In this session, we present our cross-institutional research idea of jointly investigating the pedagogical opportunities and implications of assessed groupwork incorporating a peer evaluation process. Building on White et al's (2005) survey study, we will report our early findings from a mixed-methods research study that elicits students' perceptions of fairness. Our additional aim is to gather and discuss possible pedagogical approaches based on literature review and staff survey data. To finish we would like to seek feedback from the audience about our research idea and their perceptions and practices on designing and implementing group assessment, and our shared hopes to create the 'dream team' assessment.
Session Description	Introduction: Group work has become a key element of a degree programme. The many reasons for this include: development of a widely recognised employability skill; valuable and deep learning

experience for students; a sustainable learning activity with growing cohort size. However, students can also struggle with learning and implementing team management skills and in addition to this the most common complaint from students is parity between student contribution when the work is summatively assessed (Davies 2009). Students undertaking group work have to overcome complex and messy interactions with others as part of the learning process. Autonomy, personal control, and individual responsibility is replaced by storming, forming, and norming as groups navigate new dynamics before they can look to perform. When you add summative assessment into this mix it is little wonder that assessment fairness is the number one concern for students, reported in research literature and module feedback.

**Technology and groupwork:** Technology has the potential to support students and staff in the groups allocation, development, management, production and reflection. To achieve this, the teaching design, practice and the technology needs to be carefully aligned. This is a complex task, requiring both knowledge of the technology and assessment design. This project is focusing on only one aspect of the process, student peer evaluation. Three UK institutions (Universities of Liverpool, Newcastle, and Liverpool John Moores) independently instigated the same digital peer evaluation of group work platform (Buddycheck) to address these assessment challenges. They have come together to jointly investigate the pedagogical opportunities and implications of assessed groupwork incorporating a peer evaluation process that helps moderate group marks so that each student is rewarded with an individual mark based on their contribution to teamwork. Buddycheck is based on CATME (Comprehensive Assessment of Team Member Effectiveness) Peer Evaluation tool which has been used in a variety of ways to support group work skills and behaviours, however, the effectiveness of any such tools also depends on the design and support student have to successfully complete their work together.

**Research aims and methodology:** The first aim of this current project is to establish a framework of principles that academics could consider building into their assessment design. These include: structure of the interaction; learning objectives; approach to marking; tutor guidance; group membership and use of roles (Forsell et al., 2020; de Hei et al., 2016). Technology may introduce further complexities or opportunities to provide structure to help students navigate this process. This is dependent on the overall design of the assessment and its integration of the technology. The project will collect the details of each assessment structure to analyse who current designs link with the literature helping to identify gaps and opportunities for develop. The other aim of this project concerns exploring students' perception of fairness when undertaking peer review of fellow group members as part of an assignment. The concept of fairness in group work is complex and dynamic with students perceptions shifting to other aspects of the

learning experience beyond the assessment design and requires new ways of thinking about formative and summative assessments (Nordberg, 2006). Details of group assessment design practices will be elicited via a staff survey. One aspect of the originality of the study is to explore such perceptions and assessment practices across different institutions.



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<b>Session Start Time</b>	10:30
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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Tutors' and students' approach to a pedagogic shift to Active Blended Learning (ABL)
Presenters (lead & co-presenters)	Virginia Teixeira Antunes Rob Howe
Institution	University of Northampton
Format	Research paper or work in progress
Abstract	A research study was conducted at a Higher Education Institution to evaluate a pedagogic shift to Active Blended Learning (ABL) as institutional approach to learning and teaching. The study focused initially on barriers and enablers to engagement with ABL. It explored how this pedagogic shift was perceived and understood by tutors and how their beliefs influenced engagement with the pedagogic approach in teaching practice. Tutors' beliefs and teaching practice were grouped in four main categories: 'Active Innovators' who believe change is positive and apply it to their academic practice; 'Lagging Innovators' who hold positive beliefs but fail to fully implement it; 'Sceptical but obliging' who hold negative beliefs but whose practices are consistent with the new approach; and 'Sceptical and resistant' who hold negative beliefs and actively resist implementing it in their practice. The final stage of the study focused on the student experience and found barriers and enablers perceived by students linked to their learning experiences, their social experiences and the support provision in the institution within an ABL context. This presentation will discuss how these findings may be of value for other HE institutions engaging in organisational shifts and transformative approaches to pedagogy.
Session Description	"The presentation would follow five key areas of focus:

1. A quick overview of the institutional context and the rationale for the pedagogic shift adopted by the institution

The study behind the relevant articles focused on tutors' and students' experiences of an institutional pedagogic shift to Active Blended Learning (ABL) at a teaching and employability-focused Higher Education Institution. This pedagogic approach was supported by the move to a purpose-built, digitally rich campus without lecture theatres, which consolidated an institutional commitment to teaching in small groups.

2. A general description of the research process, study design and methodology.

The research was conducted in three stages. The first two stages focused on tutors. Stage 1 consisted of an electronic survey sent to academic staff via email and institutional forums. Stage 2 consisted of 10 semi-structured interviews with academic staff representing two of the three faculties. Five academics from each participating faculty volunteered to be interviewed.

Stage 3 focused on student experience. Focus groups were conducted addressing views on the teaching practices of tutors who had taught participants for at least one term and who had themselves taken part in the initial stages of the research.

Quantitative data was analysed through descriptive statistical analysis and qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.

3. Discussion of findings related to staff's perspectives of the pedagogic shift within this institutional context

The findings suggest that the way tutors approached the pedagogic shift can be grouped in four main categories: 'Active Innovators' who believe change is positive and apply it to their academic practice; 'Lagging Innovators' who hold positive beliefs but fail to fully implement it; 'Sceptical but obliging' who hold negative beliefs but whose practices are consistent with the new approach; and 'Sceptical and resistant' who hold negative beliefs about ABL and actively resist implementing it in their practice. The article suggests that institutions aiming to promote large-scale sustainable change, may approach the process through two routes: (1) a pragmatic route, focused on promoting change in practice (i.e. practice generates subsequent changes to beliefs); and (2) an epistemic route, aimed at promoting changes to beliefs (i.e. beliefs change first, practices follow).

Several barriers and enablers to implementing ABL were highlighted from our study. The findings suggest that the normalisation and effective embedding of digital technology and small group teaching are two major enablers of pedagogic transformation to ABL. These factors are perceived as conducive to closer relationships between tutors and students. On the other hand, inconsistent teaching practices and the lack of student engagement with learning activities emerge as two of the main barriers.

The findings related to these initial stages of the study strongly suggest a focus on student engagement and ensuring positive learning experiences. "