

# TESTA: 3 Years On!

PASS Final Event  
24<sup>th</sup> July 2012

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# The TESTA team



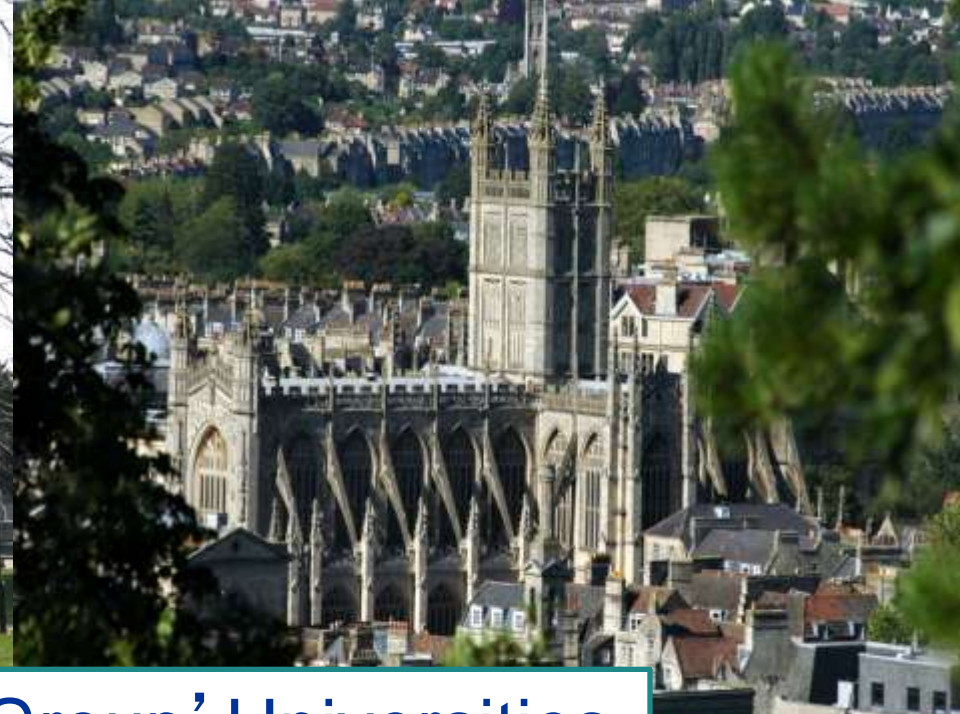
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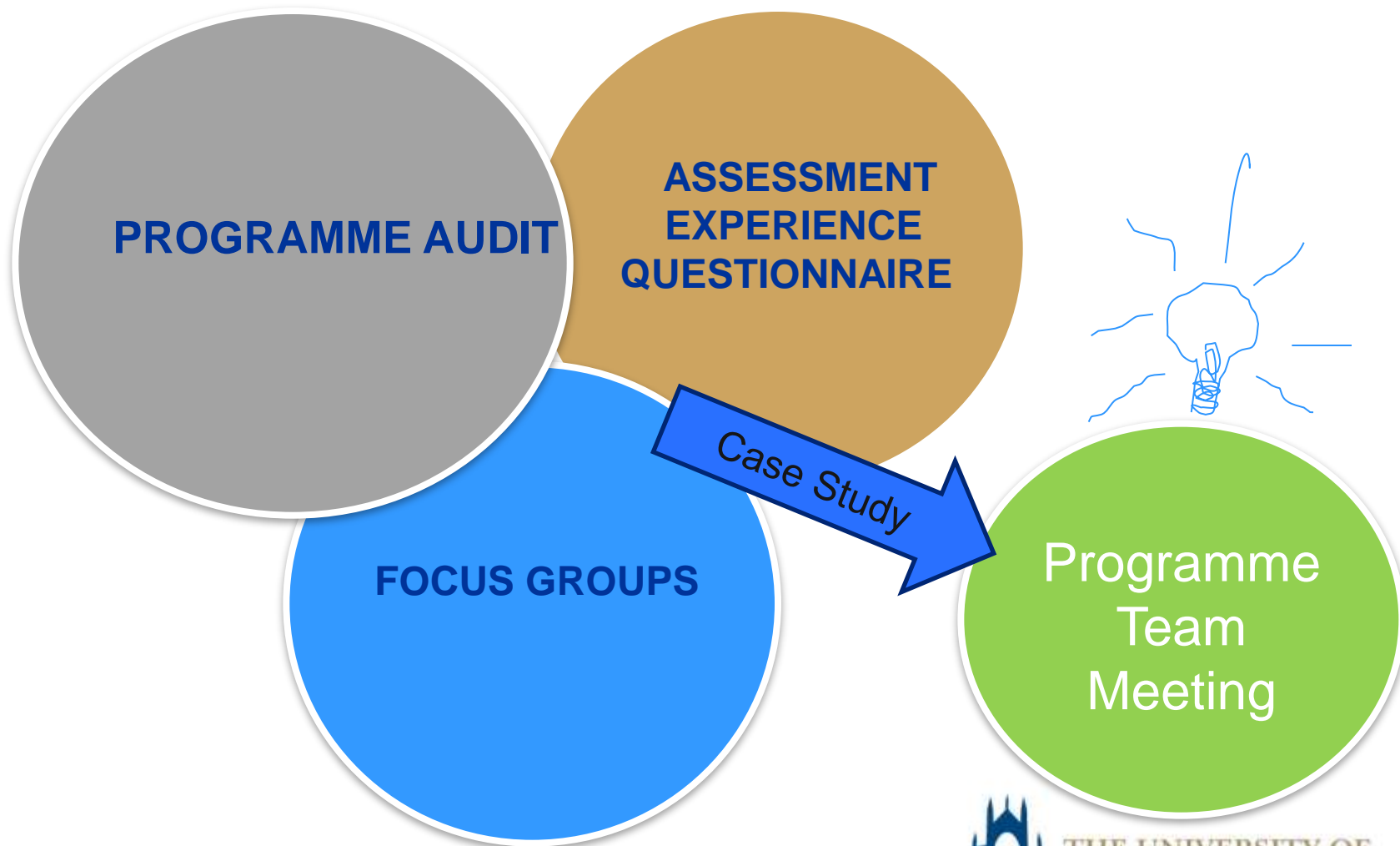
TESTA 'Cathedrals Group' Universities



# Why TESTA has been compelling

- 1) The research methodology
- 2) It is conceptually grounded in assessment and feedback literature
- 3) Focused on improving student learning
- 4) It is programmatic in focus
- 5) The change process is dialogic, developmental and collegiate

# Research Methodology



## Trends in assessment and feedback

- High summative assessment, low formative (average 37; range 26-52)
- High variety (average 11; range 7-17)
- Written feedback (average 7,153; range 2,869-15,412)
- Low oral feedback (average 6 hours)
- Watertight documents, tacit standards
- Huge institutional and programme variations:
- formative: summative ratios (134:1 cf 1:10)
- oral feedback (37 minutes to 30 hours)

# A specific example of what was found on a programme...

- Staff give masses of written feedback on assignments (15,412 words across 3 years)
- Students didn't think there was a lot of feedback or that it was very useful, and don't make use of it

Why?

# Some of the reasons...

- Feedback is too late to be useful
- Teachers have varied standards
- Students see feedback as ‘modular’
- Variety confuses students
- Formative tasks are assigned low priority
- Summative assessment drives effort



## The baffled student narrative

- The language of written criteria is difficult to understand
- feedback does not always refer to criteria
- students feel that marking standards vary and are subjective and arbitrary
- students sometimes use criteria instrumentally

*I'm not a marker so I can't really think like them... I don't have any idea of why it got that mark.*

*They have different criteria, build up their own criteria. Some of them will mark more interested in how you word things.*

*You know who are going to give crap marks and who are going to give decent marks.*

# Strategies to help students know what good is.

1. Showing students models of good work
2. Peer marking workshops
3. Lots of formative tasks with feedback
4. Plenty of interactive dialogue about standards
5. Self assessment activities

## System-wide features make it difficult for students to use feedback and act on it

- Feedback often arrives after a module, or after submission of the next task
- Tasks are not sequenced or connected across modules, leading to lack of feed forward
- Students sometimes receive grades electronically before their feedback becomes available on parchment in a dusty office
- Technology has led to some depersonalised cut and pasting

*It's rare that you'll get it in time to help you on that same module. You know that twenty other people have got the same sort of comment.*

*I look on the Internet and say 'Right, that's my mark. I don't need to know too much about why I got it'.*

*I only apply feedback to that module because I have this fear that if I transfer it to other modules it's not going to transfer smoothly.*

*You can't carry forward most of the comments because you might have an essay first and your next assignment might be a poster.*

# Some changes that have occurred...

1. Reduced summative
2. Increased formative assessment
3. Streamlined variety
4. Raised expectations of student workload
5. Sequenced and linked tasks across modules
6. Practice based changes

# HEA Change Academy

- University of Birmingham
- University of Keele
- University of Dundee
- University of Essex
- University of Coventry
- London Met University
- Robert Gordon University

TESTA – A call for more formative...

...but at what cost?





# A brand new concept of formative assessment...

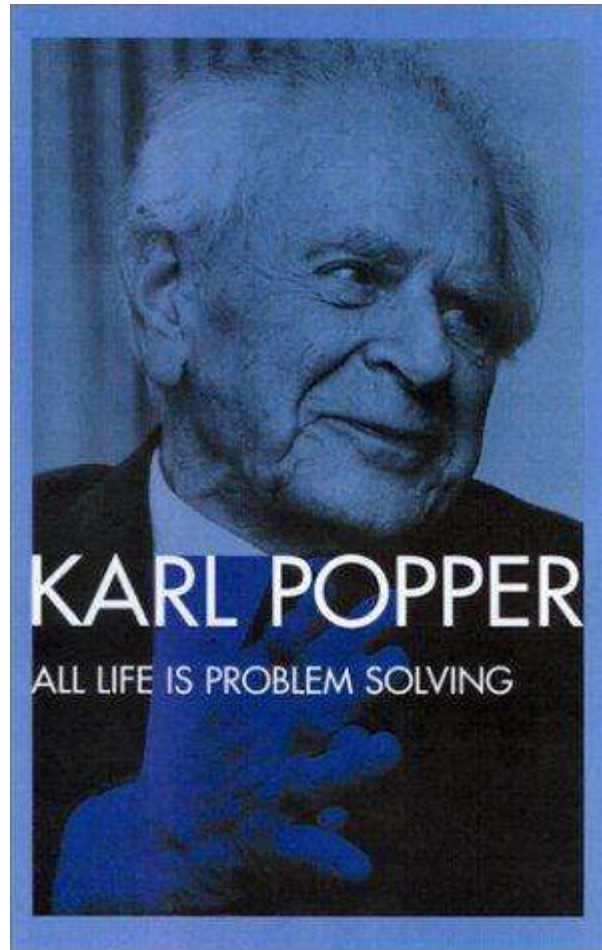
- Black and William (1998)
- Sadler (1983, 1989)
  - Possess a concept of the goal/standard or reference level being aimed for
  - Compare the actual (or current) level of performance with that goal or standard
  - Engage in appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap (1989)
- Yorke (2003)

# 7 Principles of Good Feedback

(Juwah *et al.*, 2004)

1. Facilitates the development of self assessment (reflection) in learning.
2. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
3. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standards expected).
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching

# Reflection, Problem Solving and Goal Setting



It seems to boil down to collegiate,  
evidence-based, engaging and  
reflective enhancement, in dialogue  
with our own students.

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If you have any questions please contact:

[testa@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:testa@winchester.ac.uk)

### Newsletter

## Welcome to TESTA

Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment (TESTA) is a £200,000 National Teaching Fellowship project on programme assessment, funded by the Higher Education Academy, led by the University of Winchester (2009-2012).

TESTA conducts research on eight programmes in four partner universities to map assessment environments, develop interventions and evaluate them. It works with academics, students and managers - and for students, academics and managers - to identify study behaviour, generate assessment patterns to foster deeper learning across whole programmes, and debunk regulatory myths which prevent assessment for learning.



### TESTA to Liverpool

TESTA is working with Liverpool John Moores to pilot TESTA on programmes in different faculties. Tansy, Yaz & Nicole facilitated a workshop for LJM programme leaders & education developers. ...

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## Funded By



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