

PAAIR Challenge Sessions

Title: Session 1: Programmatic assessment: Translation across disciplinary boundaries

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Please note that this transcript has been edited for clarity, grammatical accuracy, conciseness, and overall readability.

Tim Fawns: We, as many universities, at Monash are moving towards more programmatic approaches and we are trying to take a strategic responsive approach to some of the challenges and opportunities of generative artificial intelligence in education. As we started to try to respond to this strategically, we realised that there are a lot of questions that we didn't know the answers to and that we didn't have experts who could just contribute their pre-made answers and give us guidance and that everyone could follow.

So, we realised that one of the things we could do is own up to that. Own up to the fact that there are a lot of things we don't already know and instead, as well as providing guidance on things that we were able to, we could have these challenging conversations about really difficult questions. And in doing so, articulate some ideas and some thoughts and some tentative comments and produce some insights that we could take away and maybe start to develop guidance and start to ask other questions and that sort of thing.

We also thought, wouldn't it be good to bring in some people outside. We have some great expertise at Monash, but we can also draw on expertise from across the world to help us think through that.

For this first one, we could think of no one better than Tansy to bring into our conversation. So, Professor Tansy Jessop, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students at the University of Bristol. Tansy has authored a great paper on the implications of program assessment patterns for student learning. But Tansy is also really well known for her impactful work with TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment). Tansy has consulted with many universities internationally, spoken at many more, including our own Malaysia Campus Learning and Teaching conference late last year.

So Tansy has been kind enough to join us in this conversation. We also have Professor Claire Palermo, who you probably know, if you're listening in from Monash, is the Deputy Dean Education in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing, Health Sciences (MNHS). Claire is an accredited practising dietitian, amazing educator and amazing education leader, also written on the topic of programmatic assessment and is an academic lead for the PAAIR Project, which is Programmatic Assessment and AI Integration Review Project that you'll no doubt hear more about in this conversation, and also the Academic lead of the wider Assessment Advancement Project at Monash, for which PAAIR is a sort of catalyst.

Also on this panel is me, Associate Professor Tim Fawns. I'm part of the Monash Education Academy (MEA), one of the Academic leads of the PAAIR Project as well. The other Academic lead is Ari Seligmann, who isn't joining us for this conversation, but will no doubt be in conversations going forward.

The way this will operate is we will be talking about a particular challenge, which we'll introduce to you after Tansy's had a chance to talk through some of her insights. And then if you can use the Q&A to ask questions, we will feed them into the panel and use the chat to just say whatever's on your mind which will be interesting in and of itself if we don't answer all of the questions during this session. We will figure out a way to follow up on those as well. So please just keep piling the difficult questions as hard as you can. We will use them as a sort of bank of resources and questions to follow up after this.

Claire Palermo: A really wonderful introduction and it's great to just be here for this conversation. I look forward to having it.

Tim Fawns: Fantastic and thank you to people posting in the chat.

Tansy Jessop: First of all, I just want to thank you, Tim and Claire for inviting me this morning. It's a great joy to be with you. Sorry. It's morning for me. Evening for you. So let me crack on. I'll speak for about ten minutes, because I know that there'll be plenty of questions. And I think we want to focus on the questions. So just want to give you a bit of background to transforming the experience of students through assessment, otherwise known as TESTA.

Tim, you'll be relieved we didn't call it PLATES, which was our initial goal, which wouldn't have quite had the same ring. So, a wonderful Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Bath Spa gave us the acronym TESTA, which I think added to its flavour really because it is about transformational learning but it's also about assessment as testing in some sense, although we're trying to get away from that.

So what is TESTA? So TESTA is a program that was launched in 2009, funded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which you will know, does a lot of the accreditation for fellowships, and I know the Australians have really leant into that. In those days they used to fund us, these days we pay them, but the Higher Education Academy gave us £200,000 for a three year national teaching fellowship project and we worked with Graham Gibbs. Many of you might know of Graham Gibbs, the fantastic educational developer who wrote all of those "53 Ways to Teach" or "53 Ways to Give Seminars" back in the noughties.

Basically the thesis behind TESTA is we need to really step back and look at a whole programs assessment. It's no good just looking at the modular aspects or the unit or the single assessments. We need to see it from the perspective of the students' experience through a whole program. The first principle is to step back and look at the program. The second is, do it in a way which understands how it's experienced by students. And the third principle is really that it's evidence based.

So TESTA is a research process which involves collecting audit data about the planned curriculum.

How many assessments?

How many formative?

How many summative?

How many varieties?

How much feedback?

What proportion is by examination?

So all of that data is the planned curriculum, which we think is what's going on and then we collect the experiential curriculum by doing focus groups with students, usually finalists on the program, but sometimes through the years. We have an assessment experience questionnaire, which we've retested and revamped over the years. We've got version 5 now. It was version 3.3 which originally Graham developed with Paul Ramsden, who was also in Australia and did the course experience questionnaire.

So, that's the methodology, but it's not just a research process, because what we do is we take all that data and we write it into a case study, which is quite student facing. We really lift the quotations up into

headlines from students. We thematically analyse them and give them some prominence and we bring that case study back to a program team and have a discussion over it. The discussion is usually incredibly lively because people recognise their students in it and sometimes are offended, sometimes amused, sometimes want to take issue. So you have quite a lively discussion, which is the beginning of a change process and then we as academic developers support programs to make changes, which are program wide changes. So the reason for this, I suppose we want to move on to the next slide, which for me is the best picture to represent what's going on in program design and module design. I think what's going on is people are seeing their own assessment, their own module. Do you call them modules or units, Tim?

Tim Fawns: We call them units, mostly.

Tansy Jessop: We call them units in Bristol, too. So, I'll stick with units. Generally speaking, when we design a unit and its assessment, or lecturers design an assessment they're looking at, their part of the elephant; the tusk, the tail, the feet, the ears, and they're seeing that bit. They're not necessarily seeing what's gone before, what's coming after, how it stacks up as a whole elephant.

And that is the elephant in the room. You see how it sometimes feels from a student experience. It feels quite incoherent and jumbled up because the assessment over the whole program is not necessarily sequenced in an intuitive way. Often there's quite a lot of repetition, lots of essays or exams or random exciting pieces of assessment, like a poster or a podcast or something different. This is what students say about the incoherence, but these are sort of typical comments from students.

I'll let you read them.

[Student quote: "It's like getting six people to do one-sixth of a painting jamming it together and wanting it to be one painting."]

[Student quote: "I expected a lot more structuring around assessments in terms of building upon what you've already done. It often felt like lecturers weren't aware of what had happened before when they were teaching you "their" thing."]

[Student quote: "I just feel like the different lecturers didn't talk to each other when putting their views together...if there had been a clear narrative between them, like building on it, taking each other's ideas - then..."]

There's almost a sense, as though students feel lecturers are not really talking to one another across the program.

And look, it varies. Some more linear programmes that have got professional accreditation like medicine and have got a more framed curriculum. If you go to philosophy, you know, some other programs that don't have professional accreditation, it's very bitsy and bitty, you'll end up with a huge amount of fragmentation, some repetition.

I was at one of the UK's best universities from a research perspective, doing a talk some years ago and students had said to their chemistry lecturer, "Everything is so repetitive - we keep getting the same assessment, the same content."

She spent her Christmas holidays going through all the slides as well as the unit descriptors and she found that actually there was loads of repetition because people weren't talking to each other and they hadn't designed the program as a program.

So, that's one of the consequences of just looking at single assessments. You get a sort of structural disconnect through modularity through unitisation, but what I found in analysing data from about 14 universities and 60 programs and writing my book, which was published a couple of years ago, there is a kind of meaning disconnect as well as a structural disconnect. We often think about how students learn as being just in the head, just a cognitive psychological problem, but actually it's quite sociological. And in writing the book, I looked at a lot of the literature on alienation, both from a sociological and a psychological perspective and students are displaying some signs of alienation.

And really, the antidote **to** that is engaging students and enabling them to have more agency, more choice, more decision making power, more problem solving, enabling them to be at the helm of their assessment rather than the passive recipients of it. These are the signs of alienation that comes through in TESTA data.

So the first is that students often describe themselves as lacking power and that's often because they're overwhelmed by the volume of assessment which is a feature of modularity. So if I'm only looking at my module, my unit, "gee, I've got a test that they've learned everything, all the intended learning outcomes", but actually that's replicated across the whole program. In fact, I'm competing with concurrent units that students are doing for students' time and attention. So, I tend to assess more in what Tony Holland describes as the "Assessment Arms Race" and all of us in a program need to **climb** down from the amount of summative assessment we're giving students and actually increase how much assessment for learning, how much risk taking, playful formative assessment with feedback that helps students calibrate standards that we do.

So the first sign of alienation is students feel overwhelmed. They lack power.

The second is their lack of agency. The power to make choices because they feel 'done' too. The assessment is done to them. They feel like they're the passive recipients rather than shaping their learning.

And the third is because when we design in unitized ways and we're not talking to each other necessarily, we might moderate, we might do all the QA processes, but actually, students are uncertain about expectations, about norms. The standards feel to vary for them, even though we say, well it's our academic judgement and it's very fair and it's criterion referenced. From a student perspective, it feels as though there are more difficult assessments and units and then there are tamer ones. And so there's a sense that norms are something that students feel unclear about.

And finally, students feel their assessment lacks meaning because it doesn't necessarily speak to authentic problems and attention and some branded stuff about authenticity, but it doesn't really speak to society.

What difference does this assessment make to me and to society?

Is it just an artifice, or is it something that has deeper meaning, further meaning and stretches beyond my particular measurement you're doing of my command of the learning outcomes?

I'll stop there. That's a brief summary of what TESTA is about. Thanks, Tim.

Tim Fawns: Thanks very much. Amazing. I would encourage everyone to hold some of those thoughts in your head as we talk about our challenge conversation today. So the coherence aspect, the putting together of an elephant. The student agency, the consideration of uncertainty, expectations, the meaning that things make to society. Without further ado, I know Claire, you've probably got a question up your sleeve, but, I'll read out the question just to give you a little bit more time to think. And so the challenge that we want to talk about today is:

- How do we define "programmatic" in a way that makes sense for each faculty and discipline at Monash?
- How do the principles translate across disciplinary boundaries and education practices?

I think this challenge did not come from us, but from someone who was, based in one of the faculties who were working through the pair project in which they needed to try to move towards more programmatic approaches for their discipline.

So that'll be the theme of these challenge conversations that we'll be sourcing them. So, Claire did that buy you enough time to think about a question.

Claire Palermo: Just reflecting on Tansy's thoughts, Tim. What's your initial response to that question about why are we coming up against some of these challenges around having a whole of program approach and how might that translate across boundaries for the disciplines that you perhaps have worked with around assessment?

Tim Fawns: A lot of the challenges that are coming up now in relation to trying to move towards more programmatic approaches and in trying to respond to some of the challenges and opportunities and sort of strangeness of generative AI situation. A lot of what we need to do is things that we already needed to do, but now there's a renewed urgency.

We always needed to have a think about how we can give students more agency within their teaching, learning and their assessment, which is always coming up against that power dynamic of how do you have agency when someone else is actually dictating the outcome of your qualifications?

I mean, you and **they** are dictating it, but someone else is overseeing the judgement of that.

How are you going to try to make your learning experience coherent. Having learned a whole lot of things in a few years, there's always a job for the student, no matter how well we do as designers of programmatic approaches, as there's always going to be a job for the student to try and develop some sort of coherence of what they've learned and how they might articulate that to employers and to peers and others.

So I think it, it is a, it is both a disciplinary and an interdisciplinary concern. We're never really just staying in our lanes these days and probably never. So even if you follow just Medicine, then you are also going to have to be able to talk to people from other disciplines, and you're going to have to think about how what you've learned applies to them. So there's always this kind of synthesis work that students need to do.

The elephant is a really interesting analogy. I think sometimes there isn't really a coherent elephant in the background. You know, there's more of some sort of vivisection, where you sew different parts together to create a monster, unless we have thought through how we're doing it.

So, in order for a student to be able to see a coherent elephant, we need to have the right kind of elements in there, to be able to create something. We need to scaffold that, but we also need to help them develop that capacity for synthesising what they've done and applying it. And we can do that at the unit level, but we can also do it at program level. I don't think I answered your question at all...

Claire Palermo: No, no. You're good. It's good because you prompted me to focus a question a little bit more to Tansy, about what approaches have you seen different disciplines take for that dilemma of units being, uh, you know, choose your own adventure kind of endeavour? You know, one beautiful thing

about programmatic assessment is that you don't have to do it one way. There's not one way to do it. So, I'm sure the audience would love to hear some of the ways people have tackled that. You know, a course can look like a lot of different things to a lot of different students depending on the journey they take.

Tansy Jessop: You know, really interesting. So when we initially started TESTA, I was working at the University of Winchester and the way that some programs embraced the findings of TESTA was to do quite a top down approach. So, for example, the business school decided that they would have, um, a mandate that every program, every unit would have two or three formative assessments linked to one summative and that was it. They just took that as a sort of mandate.

A few years later, they recalibrated, but it was quite an interesting experiment because one of the key dimensions of being programmatic is thinking about what's happening to students on their other units concurrently.

An educator might say, the assessment on my unit works fantastically. I've got ten weeks and they do something every week, and then they synthesise it at the end and it's all summative. And of course, every other unit is competing with the weekly assessment. You couldn't do that on every unit. That educator is getting all the students' attention and on the other units they've got maybe a mid unit assessment and a final and students are trying to fit that in. So it's also about balancing workloads.

And for me the real opportunity for inclusion is the most challenging thing for any teacher in higher education is getting formative assessment to grip, because staff will say to me that 'well, students won't do it', and the way that you get it to grip, I think there are a number of ways.

One is to have the sort of patchwork or portfolio approach where formative assessments form part of an appendix to a synthesis or a bigger piece that is the summative, and are milestones through the semester so that they form part of the teaching. So you can't really get further unless you've done something. So there's a sense in which getting people to do those milestones and making them engaging, exciting and meaningful enough for students to see the point and to see how they stitch up with the final assessment.

So I'll give you an example from economics. I've given you a bad example from economics. I'll give you a good example. So we've got a lecturer who got bored with marking essays on the philosophy of economics and she said to her students, "I got 200 of you. I mark all the same things 200 times - I think you might find it a bit dull, I do."

So she's got a global classroom, international students, students from all sorts of backgrounds, and she wants to sort of celebrate their diversity. So she says, "Here's the methodology. Here's the philosophy that I want you to adopt. I want you, the approach. I want you to go and find an area that really interests you, you know, so it might be geographical, it might be from your home country, it might be a company that you're interested in - whatever it is, explore that area using the economics method methodology, the evaluation techniques, the analysis techniques and the philosophical approach and write me a formative proposal for a research paper."

So they write a formative proposal. They get peer feedback, they get her feedback and it's a short proposal, but it shows their interests. Then, once they've got the feedback, they take it further and they write, you know, a paper which is a paper they could try and publish somewhere in an undergraduate research journal or elsewhere. And she gets 200 different things. She says it's quite challenging to mark because she's got to be in command of a wider area, but she's never bored, and she finds it quite exciting. Students feel the joy of having some agency, some determination over the area they're looking at. It has more meaning for them. So that's one way.

The other way is the blunt instrument of just sort of having a top down approach. So you don't have competing summatives on concurrent units.

Claire Palermo: So as you were talking there, I was thinking about courses that have an unprescribed structure in particular. There could be one unit that every student has to do, but then students can do other things. So, how do you design programmatic assessment? One idea that came to mind as you were talking then is that you might ask the students to collate that evidence against course learning outcomes based on the various adventures that they've had during their degree. Obviously there needs to be some planning that goes into what those adventures continue to demonstrate learning against the course learning outcomes, but that also is a potential way to build student agency. Tim, do you have any other ideas about how people might tackle this for those course structures that look a bit different to that nice prescription that we often see in Medicine.

Tim Fawns: Yeah, I was thinking about this idea of how you can try to see a program from the students point of view rather than just from an administrative view where we often say, well, let's plan it out like this, and then we'll structure it like this. Actually, every program looks slightly different from the individual student's view, especially when you have options and choices and loose structures. I remember I was involved in some research at the University of Edinburgh that had a lot of different disciplines involved in it. For some professions like Medicine, the career trajectory and the structure, the accreditation, it was all quite tightly done and you knew what the career path was. You knew what it meant to be a medic and think like a medic, but if you took something else like digital education or, or digital media or studies or something like that, then essentially those graduates and those students needed to forge their own career path and their own career identity and work out what kind of thing it was that they were trying to become and what it meant to think like a digital educationalist or something like that.

Part of that work really needs to be done during the program, rather than hoping that they figure it out once they try to get a job. And to me, the portfolio approach is quite important to that because if you have let's say you take six physics units and then you have a choice. You have an option of 20 electives. There's still a physics aspect there that's really important.

So can you create a way in which a student develops a portfolio of evidence as they do things that you bring back either as a capstone at the end or through structured periods during the program or course that you ask them to make associations between what they've learned, reflect on it, synthesise it as a physicist, you know, thinking like a physicist? Because I think it's not just that you do some sort of reflective capstone, but that you really think about what it means to have done this program that you've done.

Who are you at the end of it?

What is it?

How does it fit in the employment landscape?

And that sort of thing. I think sometimes we, I'm sure there are pockets where we do that well, but I think maybe paying explicit attention to what type of identity might this student want to forge and how might that use that identity as a lens for looking at the whole program of work that they've done. Probably not right at the end, but all the way through, because otherwise it's quite a hard job. Where do we make space, you know, curricular and in our team decision making for those types of efforts?

Claire Palermo: Tansy, unless you've got a response, I might jump in there with a question. How do we kind of change the culture of universities to have more focus on the student and student agency and assessment and any reflections you've had from your journeys about how do we change those mindsets?

Tansy Jessop: Well, I loved what Tim was saying, which relates to this. The sense of students becoming and how they curate an identity through a program, but it's a two way street. Because if the elephant is a jumble, then it's much harder for students to do that curation portfolio style. So I think you need both and probably you need both together. And to come to your question about how we involve students more in the co-creation work around curriculum. One of the challenges often is that a lot of the co-creation work, certainly I've been involved in, has been outside of term time because you need time and thinking space and bandwidth, which with academics to spend time looking at the whole curriculum and we've done with every one of our 29 schools of Bristol, loads of programs. We've done curriculum design workshops which map the assessment through a whole program where everyone is there and they start looking at it, and then we look at some ideas and we remap and we try and get a whole programmatic view. But having students in the room just makes that a much richer conversation, but often because it's outside of term time, that's more challenging. So there's a logistical challenge to having students working on curriculum when you've got academics not teaching and available for a long day workshop or something. So I think you need both and we've had in some schools, um, loads of students in the co-creation exercise where they participate with staff and give their feedback. But in a way, I suppose the way I've landed doing it is through TESTA where you have the focus groups, where you can have at any time students talking about their curriculum. You know, potentially you could do more of what Tim was saying, almost leading into the capstone, getting people to map instead of just doing a focus group, getting students to map their journeys and talk about it as part of the research exercise and the co-creation to feed into staff discussions if you can't get them in the room together, which has been our challenge because of bandwidth, time and operational issues. I mean, sometimes there's power issues as well, but I think in general, lots of staff have moved on from thinking "Us" and "Them" and are quite keen to work with students. Not everyone.

Tim Fawns: Are there any disciplinary differences in how we can involve students in these kinds of processes? I'm thinking particularly about professional accreditation and professions and that sort of thing and other disciplinary differences in how we can involve students in helping us move towards more programmatic approaches that work for students?

Claire Palermo: I'm not sure that the accreditation systems that sit in health or other professionally focussed accredited courses would require any different sort of student journey. I think there might be additional requirements that perhaps might be required to address certain things in an external accreditor might be wanting that we might need to think about in terms of assessment planning and a lot of accreditors sometimes do overkill on that and it might not be what we think is actually going to be the best thing. So sometimes that derails our best plans, but I think involving students in the conversation, I don't think there should be anything different. In fact, a lot of external accreditors always ask "How is feedback from learners captured and how are you responding to that feedback in order to improve the quality of your program?" So I think anything that you do to strengthen the student voice in and around assessment will only be a good thing.

Tim Fawns: Do you have a view on that?

Tansy Jessop: I tend to agree, but accrediting bodies and the wider view of many colleagues is that students actually when you collect their views, you actually understand their perspective better and can make the quality of assessment much better. So, I think the listening exercise is really important and acting on student feedback. I suppose there's a question around the diversity of student feedback. So, some students may want one thing and others a different thing and I think that's something for us to navigate as an academic community. So for me, there's an issue around how students learn and I sometimes find it irksome if we just roll over when we know sometimes doing something that students might not like at the time may be the best way to learn something. That sometimes the penny drops off to time, that learning is not easy, that it can be painful and discomforting. So sometimes we've got to hold our nerve in the wake of "let's do more of this". Students might say, and I think we've got to draw on

evidence, literature, theories of how students learn, as well as student voice to come up with good curriculum and assessment design. So I think it's both, and.

Tim Fawns: How do we do these difficult big things without changing the course structure - can we can we sort of leave a lot of it in place that do things somewhat programmatically or does it all involve actually making quite bigger changes to the structure of how a program works?

Tansy Jessop: One of the challenges often in terms of doing big structural changes is our systems and our curriculum management systems and our assessment systems are modular. They're unitized, certainly ours at Bristol, and actually collecting evidence of achievement of passing in one unit is quite fragile. All the processes around resets and, you know, and quite complex. In my view this is about taking a program approach, stepping back and saying let's work as a team. Let's have a program philosophy and a shared purpose. C Let's think about how this stacks up over a program through quite simple mechanisms of spending time together, mapping, asking each other questions, challenging working with students and thinking about what the student journey feels like. So it sounds a bit sort of Fabian, "What do we want? Revolution! Well, probably not," is quite incrementalist in a way and it's about stepping back and seeing how everything works together as a program and iterating that because it doesn't happen in one go. Look, I'd love to do what you know, some people do and change the whole landscape immediately, but we've got students in play with expectations all the time. So by necessity, often it's quite incrementalist, but I think the key thing is to step back and look at the whole program and understand how it works from a student perspective and then work to make it more effective, coherent, meaningful, and frankly, from the evidence, enable students to have more and do more formative tasks and get more formative feedback and give more formative peer feedback so that the environment is all about learning rather than measurement milestones. I don't know if you've got a problem in Australia post COVID, but we've got a problem in the sector around re-engaging students, the flexibility, the generative AI, the whole different dimension of how higher education feels and we've got to think of different ways in which engagement occurs. I think some of that is by putting more emphasis on skills. Putting more emphasis on doing. On team work. On being. On becoming. On whole person education. I think that's the challenge for me.

Claire Palermo: And that might be where you start. So rather than throwing everything that was good about a course out, and remember, these courses were set up with the greatest of intention and are probably really great bones. Starting small incrementally thinking about what are the critical skills. Even if you just choose two and map the journey of learning all of those skills through the program, that would be a fantastic start. Then the rest can start to follow.

Tim Fawns: How do we manage programmatic assessment in large, complex courses with shared or common units across multiple programs?

Tansy Jessop: So I think this is a really vexing question. I think one of the things we are doing as a result of many factors, not least the financial constraints that the sector is under, is thinking about how to think about the paradox of choice. We often think choice is a wonderful thing, but it is not always when it creates incoherence and anxiety for students and difference and differential experiences. So we're thinking about how we simplify the portfolio to create more themed pathways. More ways of actually an intuitive journey through the program rather than random optionality everywhere or lots of joins. In my experience, you know, joint honours degrees, for example, are often two sides kind of rammed together with no synthesis or join in the middle. You do physics and philosophy where you do physics with physicists and you do philosophy with the philosophers and you come out with an allegedly integrated joint degree, but it's actually two halves and they're not joined. So there's something around the design of joined programs that needs a spine or a connective tissue type of unit that runs through it that says, okay, if you're doing philosophy and physics, you know, these are your sort of mandatory and choices and this is the spine around you becoming as a logician, a philosopher whose done physics. So I think maybe we need to be a bit more creative and inventive around those kind of connective tissue bits for

students who are doing stuff that's joined up, but I think we also need to take a sharp eye to where universities have evolved - lots of choice driven programs that don't really make sense. I think there's a task perhaps we need to do, which is slightly scanning the horizon. Large programs always bring the sort of challenge of people saying you can teach 500 students in a big room and then have seminars or labs, but it's the assessment where the workload kicks in. The more authentic and diversified you become, the more challenging it is to standardise and also the more challenging it is to workload model in a fair way where you have norms, the marking. I think that that is an issue en masse in higher education.

Tim Fawns: I've had some similar thoughts and one of the thoughts I've had is that you might introduce some connective tissue through a program that is quite flexible in itself. So it's not tailored to those two disciplines working together, but whatever the students are doing. But then it's difficult to know what kind of educator you would need to do a good job of helping the student make those connections independent of your discipline and that is exacerbated by doing it with a large number of students. So you already have an assessment and feedback issue if you have a large number of students and then you're trying to do something quite challenging with all of those students. So it is a resource issue, but it is important to know that you already have a resource issue in a large course most of the time that probably does constrain the types of feedback and assessment you are able to do. We're suggesting trying to find ways forward that are helpful to the student, but pretty much all ways that are helpful to the student will involve richer feedback and richer encounters with educators, which is a resource challenge with big courses.

Claire Palermo: It's also about rethinking the kinds of assessment we do, I think is part of that. So we need to value the relationships that some of our teaching support staff might have with a smaller group of students and valuing what the programmatic literature calls lower stakes assessment and emphasising them more than the tasks that are handed in and marked in bulk with thousands and thousands to kind of ream through. That will deal with the workload issues, while at the same time, I think focusing and showing students that this is the learning and the assessment that we actually value. That's, that's going to take some brave educators to make that transition, I think.

Tansy Jessop: Talking of brave educators, I've got three chemists who teach together. One is organic, one is inorganic, whatever the other one is, and they teach as a team. So the inorganic teaches organic and the organic, and they do it together and they kind of have this lively dialogue. So you can imagine doing a sort of connective unit where you bring together people and almost have the Pedagogy of Vulnerability where everyone's learning and you teasing out and having a sort of Socratic conversation and inviting students into that and having their own conversations across the boundaries.

Tim Fawns: So, the challenge was how do we define programmatic in a way that makes sense for each faculty and discipline and or how do the principles translate across disciplinary boundaries and practices?

Claire Palermo: I think what I've learnt from this conversation is start with the student and that's perhaps not where I've started always in my work in programmatic assessment and I think Tansy's and your words Tim have resonated that that's a way to deal with some of that complexity that we have with some of our courses that are not one size fits all. If we think about the student and that journey and maybe challenging that notion of maybe too much choice is actually not a good thing, focusing on critical skill acquisition and managing the program level assessment of those skills, we might start to make inroads.

Tim Fawns: What I took was that we probably need a mix of things going on. We need a mix of structural approaches where we do maybe introduce new mechanisms to tie things together, new communication channels, new decision making processes, but new sort of team structures so that people talk to each other more across programs and new ways of making sure, like Claire said, that we take the student view as well as the administrative view and get students involved. We also need iterative approaches because we can't start from a blank page. We can't do everything at once. So we need to think about

moves that we can make that take us in a particular direction and for that we need to know what that direction will be. We need to think hard and long about where it is that we would like to end up, and then think about that direction as a way of guiding us in this, in the iterative moves that we make. Claire and I and others at Monash tried to adapt programmatic assessment principles from the literature so that they would be cross-disciplinary so that they would make sense. One of the important parts of that is that we are not expecting everyone to be able to do full programmatic assessment. Definitely not anytime soon. Everyone will take a slightly different approach. Everyone will get a slightly a slightly different distance, but moving in that direction is important. and so what we've tried to do is create principles that give a direction.

Tansy Jessop: That's brilliant. So, agree with both comments. I think for me it's about taking a step back and getting a different view of curriculum and assessment and I would join up the fact that this is about curriculum and assessment design and there's an interplay between curriculum and assessment design and how we teach and it's the whole package here. So I think it's how we see things and for me, this is a culture change because the emphasis is on how the team thinks these things. Graham Gibbs always used to say that when Lund University ended up at reducing their academic development from ten for ten people to two, they came to a realisation that the only way they could run their academic development unit was to work with teams and the aphorism they used was that 20 brilliant steps by an individual in curriculum or assessment design are not worth one step forward by a whole team. And I think it's the one step forward by a whole team that makes program approaches come to life. So it's coming to an agreement about one or two things as a whole team and working together that gets progress round programmatic assessment. So that's my emphasis would be on the team and on curriculum design as well as assessment.

Tim Fawns: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Tansy. Thank you, Claire. Thank you to everyone for coming. And stay tuned for more challenge conversations and resources.