

# Making Assessment Meaningful: Feedback, Relevance, and Real-World Impact

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## Abstract

Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) offer an innovative model of work-integrated learning, where apprentices are employed full-time throughout their degree. As approximately 80% of their academic assessment is based on work-based activities, identifying suitable assessment topics can be a significant challenge. Many apprentices experience uncertainty when trying to align workplace projects with academic requirements. This study, funded by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) mini-enhancement projects scheme presents findings from a survey of current students and alumni. The survey was designed to investigate enhancing assessment practices and supporting apprentices in identifying appropriate assessment topics. The aim is to enhance alignment with Heriot-Watt University's teaching and learning strategy, foster inclusive and personalised assessment practices, and reflect the principles of the University's Global Changemaker Curriculum Framework. While also addressing recurring challenges such as student engagement, academic performance, time management, and retention.

## Poster Description

This poster presents a co-designed approach to supporting apprentices in selecting appropriate work-based assessment problems, guided by structured support and input from work-based mentors. The project aims to reduce the stress associated with identifying assessment topics by offering timely prompts and scaffolding throughout the process. By engaging both current apprentices and alumni, the initiative ensures that the resulting framework is both practical and inclusive.

Initial survey results indicate that the role of the work-based mentor is instrumental, alongside the learning provider (University), in helping apprentices identify and carry out suitable assessments. The combined guidance from work-based mentors and academic staff is critical to supporting meaningful, relevant, and achievable assessment experiences. The Venn diagram on the poster summarises these findings and illustrates the unique and shared contributions of academics, work-based mentors, and their collaboration in supporting apprentices' success. The poster also includes key insights and recommendations with the potential to improve engagement, support academic achievement, and enhance retention across GA programmes.

## References

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2. Riggert et al. (2006). Student employment and higher education: Empiricism and contradiction. *Review of educational research*, 76(1).
3. Heriot-Watt University, Global Changemaker Curriculum Framework <https://lta.hw.ac.uk/resources/gccf/>