5/10 'Must try harder': applying technology to the management of assessment and feedback

Gill Ferrell & Lisa Gray
Electronic management of assessment (EMA) project background

» Recently completed – a 3 year programme of work
» Involved 30 institutions, 2200 staff, 6000 students
» Main themes:
  › Feedback and feed forward
  › Enhancing student employability
  › Strategies for change
  › Electronic management of assessment (EMA)

Academic context

» Traditional culture stubbornly resistant to change
» Devolved responsibility & varied practice
» Limited opportunity for students to engage with process of making academic judgements
» Issues with degree structure
EMA study aims

» To gather examples of practices, policies & process and approaches to implementation

» To identify the challenges around EMA, in terms of pedagogy/culture, process or technology and to identify existing solutions

» To provide interim guidance to institutions

» To make recommendations to institutions, systems providers and Jisc on priorities to address
The assessment & feedback lifecycle

1. Specifying
2. Setting
3. Supporting
4. Submitting
5. Marking and production of feedback
6. Recording grades
7. Returning marks and feedback
8. Reflecting

Based on an original idea developed by Manchester Metropolitan University
Headline findings

» Nuanced responses but broad trends visible
» Localised initiatives but beginning to scale up
» System integration is a key problem area
» EMA exposes variability in business processes

“The use of technology is now a fundamental part of the support for assessment and feedback practice across the sector, but there are few examples of fully integrated approaches to supporting the whole assessment and feedback lifecycle”

Jisc, 2014
Lots of localised initiatives

How extensively has your organisation applied EMA?

- N/A
- Small scale pilots
- Large scale pilots
- Mandated locally
- Mandated organisation wide
- Don't know

5/10 'Must try harder': applying technology to the management of assessment and feedback
Loose system integration

How integrated are the core systems that support EMA?

- 51% Loosely integrated
  - (Lots of manual intervention)
- 27% Reasonably well integrated
  - (Some manual intervention)
- 11% Completely separate
- 7% Highly integrated
- 4% Don’t know
Why aren’t systems more integrated?

“No integration in any systems. Excel databases, files and folders, email system and Turnitin. Everything must be done manually between the systems.”

“Different systems store/present data in different way which makes it hard to integrate systems or even manually transfer the data.”

“Returning marks from the VLE to the student information system is a distant hope.”
Variation in business processes

How consistent are the business processes relating to assessment in your organisation?

- Limited local variation: 49%
- Lots of local variation: 36%
- Highly standardised: 12%
- Don’t know: 3%
- Don’t know: 3%
Do our processes need to change?

“Variation in practice across schools makes it difficult to provide a single institutionally supported solution.”

“For the most part these systems have been mimicking old practice and have not significantly explored the implications of storing submission, feedback and marks online.”
Pain points

- Systems integration generally
- Staff resistance
- VLE/SRS integration
- Inflexibility of systems
- Double/Second marking
- Variability of our business processes
- Anonymity
- Moderation
- Handling a variety of assessment
- External examining
- Recording marks
- Returning feedback to students
- Recording feedback
- Returning marks to students
- Accessibility/inclusivity issues
- Student resistance

Legend:
- Very problematic
- Slightly problematic
- Not a problem
- Don’t know
Top 10 EMA Challenges

1. Ability to handle variety of typical UK marking and moderation workflows
2. Reliability of submission systems
3. Lack of interoperability between marking systems and student records systems
4. Need to develop more effective student assessment literacies
5. Marking and production of feedback
6. Risk aversion
7. Ability to manage marks and feedback separately
8. Academic resistance to online marking
9. Need for greater creativity
10. Ability to gain longitudinal overview of student achievement

The assessment lifecycle:

- Specifying
- Setting
- Supporting
- Submitting
- Marking and production of feedback
- Returning marks and feedback
- Recording grades
- Reflecting
- Student engagement with feedback
- Ability to gain longitudinal overview of student achievement
- Need for greater creativity
- Ability to handle variety of typical UK marking and moderation workflows
- Reliability of submission systems
- Lack of interoperability between marking systems and student records systems
- Academic resistance to online marking
- Need to develop more effective student assessment literacies
- Need for greater creativity
- Ability to gain longitudinal overview of student achievement
Top 20 EMA Challenges

1. Ability to handle variety of typical UK marking and moderation workflows
2. Reliability of submission systems
3. Supporting
4. Submitting
5. Marking and production of feedback
6. Risk aversion
7. Need to develop more effective student assessment literacies
8. Academic resistance to online marking
9. Need for greater creativity
10. Ability to gain longitudinal overview of student achievement
11. Need to offer greater formative opportunities
12. Ability of systems to handle off-line marking
13. Systems not geared to peer assessment
14. Ability of systems to support variety of moderation process
15. Differences of opinion on value of anonymous marking
16. Notifying students when feedback is ready
17. Ability to handle variety of anonymity requirements
18. Ability of systems to support variety of grading schemes
19. Systems not geared to group submissions
20. Ability of systems to deal with mathematical, scientific, musical etc notation

- 1. Specifying
- 2. Setting
- 3. Supporting
- 4. Submitting
- 5. Student engagement with feedback
- 6. Recording grades
- 7. Returning marks and feedback
- 8. Reflecting
- 9. Need for greater creativity
- 10. Ability to gain longitudinal overview of student achievement

The assessment lifecycle

3. Lack of interoperability between marking systems and student records systems
14. Ability of systems to support variety of moderation process
18. Ability of systems to support variety of grading schemes

1. Must try harder: applying technology to the management of assessment and feedback
Where are we now?

» Review of the EMA landscape across UK HE and FE completed.

» Identified and prioritised the challenges around EMA

» Workshops in Dec 2014 and Jan 2015 explored possible solutions to these prioritised challenges

http://ema.jiscinvolve.org/
Where next?

- Landscape review – challenges prioritised
- EMA workflows project – mapping requirements
- Ongoing capture of resources – ‘EMA toolkit’ incorporating integrations
- Feedback hub scoping
- Pilots

5/10 ‘Must try harder’: applying technology to the management of assessment and feedback
EMA requirements map

» Project to **identify, validate and specify** key EMA requirements and workflows, through generic models.

» Providing clarity and transparency on workflows. Helps **systems suppliers** better support good pedagogic practice and helps **institutions** review their own practice.

» **Develop a visual way of presenting workflows;** map current systems to workflows; and engage with suppliers and developers to fill gaps.
EMA toolkit

» **Web-based toolkit** of resources: based on the **assessment and feedback lifecycle**.

» **Examples of solutions**, that can be **repurposed for local contexts**.

» Addresses the question of **‘what does good assessment design look like?’** and enhances assessment literacies of staff and students.

» **Navigation routes** through the toolkit e.g. by identified workflow and stakeholder groups.
Find out more:

» Gill Ferrell gill@aspire-edu.org

» Lisa Gray lisa.gray@jisc.ac.uk


» Join the conversation on the blog: ema.jiscinvolve.org/

and on twitter #jiscassess

» Guides, case studies, videos and other resources on assessment and feedback: bit.ly/jisc-assess