

Engaging students with assessment and feedback

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Why assessment is important

Assessment: a key driver of student learning

“Assessment is at the heart of the student experience”

(Brown, S & Knight, P., 1994)

“From our students’ point of view, assessment always defines the actual curriculum”

(Ramsden, P., 1992)

“Assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students and then as graduates.....If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment”

(Brown, G et al, 1997)

But.....

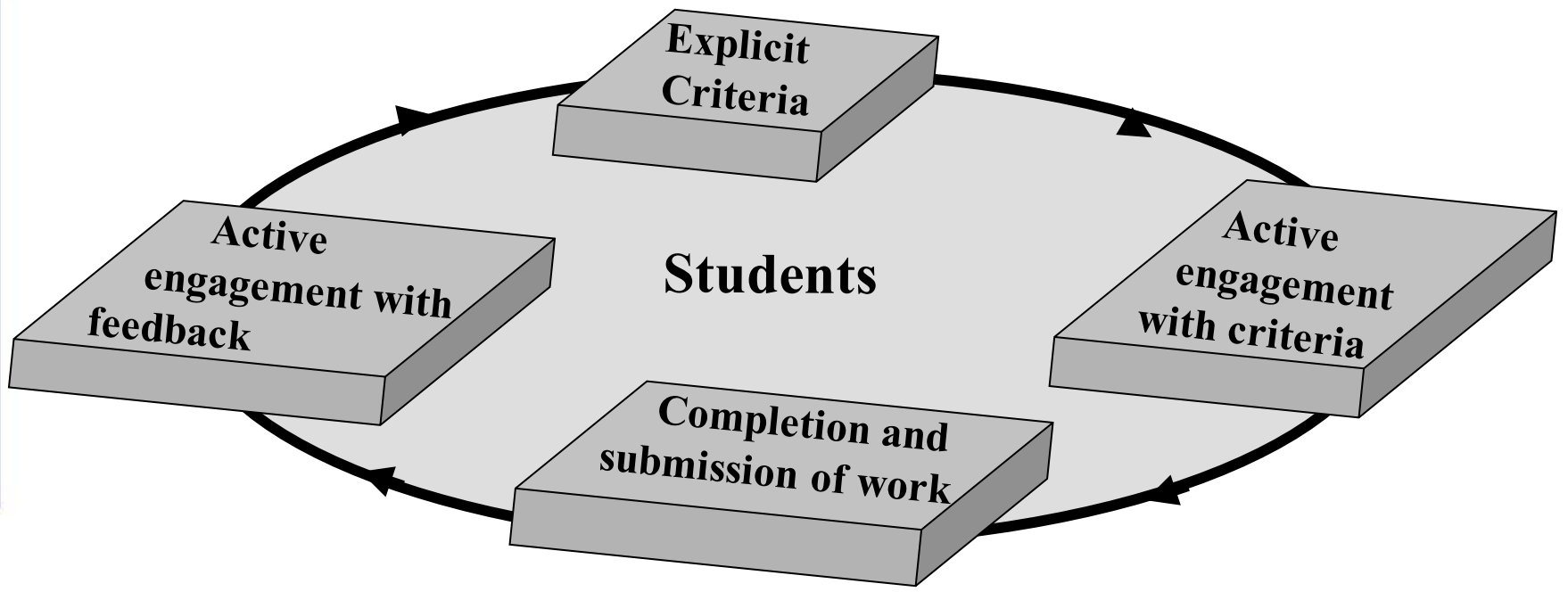
- ❑ QAA subject reviews
- ❑ National Student Satisfaction Survey
- ❑ *“the Achilles’ heel of quality”* (Knight 2002a, p. 107)
- ❑ Summative assessment practices *“in disarray”* (Knight 2002b, p. 275)
- ❑ *“Broken”* (Race 2003, p. 5)
- ❑ *“There is considerable scope for professional development in the area of assessment”* (Yorke et al, 2000, p7)
- ❑ *“...serious grounds for concern”* about assessment methodologies and statistical practices (IUSS, 2009, p116)

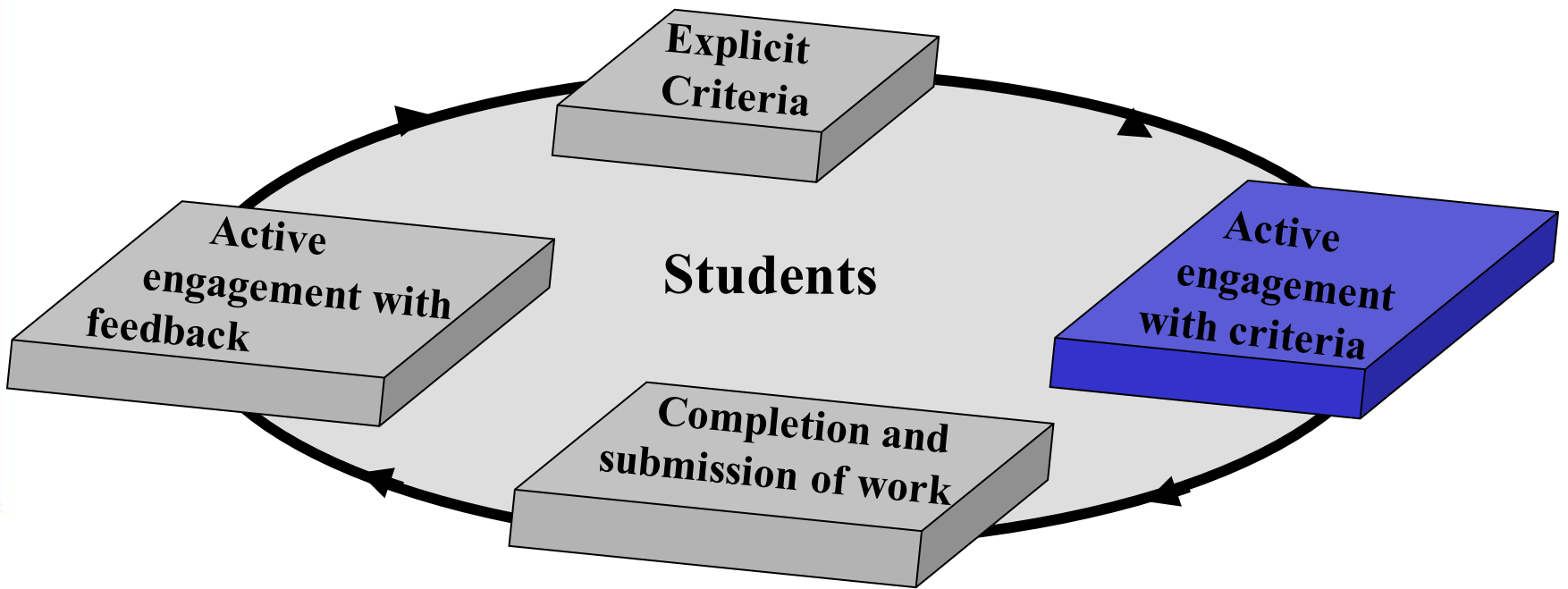
Engaging students with assessment

Social-constructivist view of assessment

the social-constructivist view of learning argues that knowledge is shaped and evolves through increasing participation within different communities of practice

the social-constructivist process model of assessment argues that students should be actively engaged with every stage of the assessment process in order that they truly understand the requirements of the process, and the criteria and standards being applied, and should subsequently produce better work (Rust C., O'Donovan, B., & Price, M., 2005)

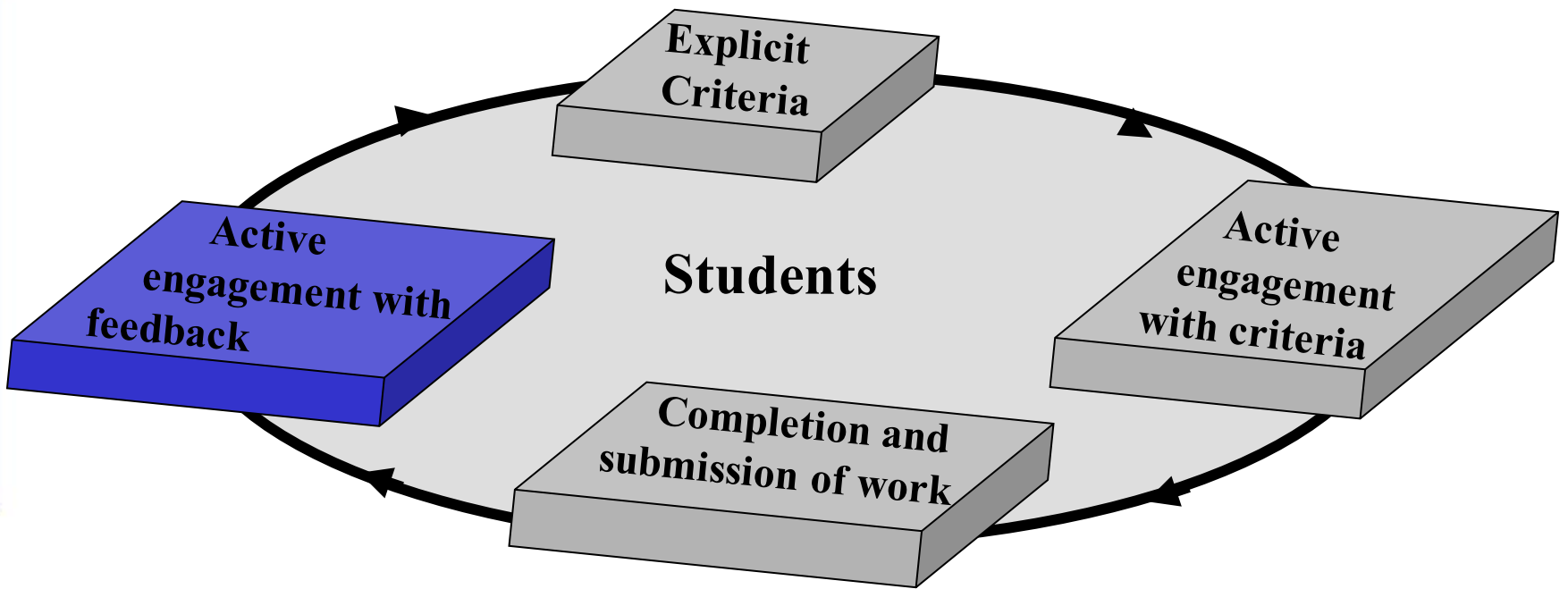




Engaging students with criteria

Get students actively using the criteria through a developmental combination of:

- Marking exercises
- Self-assessment
- Peer-feedback
- Peer-assessment
- Possibly creating and negotiating criteria



Potential of feedback

Feedback is the most powerful single influence that makes a difference to student achievement

Hattie (1987) - *in a comprehensive review of 87 meta-analyses of studies*

Feedback has extraordinarily large and consistently positive effects on learning compared with other aspects of teaching or other interventions designed to improve learning

Black and Wiliam (1998) - *in a comprehensive review of formative assessment*

Students are hungry for feedback to develop their learning
(Higgins et al, 2002)

Feedback problems

- ❑ Unhelpful feedback (Maclellan, 2001)
- ❑ Too vague (Higgins, 2000)
- ❑ Subject to interpretation (Ridsdale, 2003)
- ❑ Not understood (e.g. Lea and Street, 1998)
- ❑ Don't read it (Hounsell, 1987)
- ❑ Damage self-efficacy (Wotjas, 1998)
- ❑ Has no effect (Fritz et al, 2000)
- ❑ Seen to be too subjective (Holmes & Smith, 2003)

*It is not enough to improve feedback as a monologue; we must make it **a dialogue** (Nicol, 2009)*

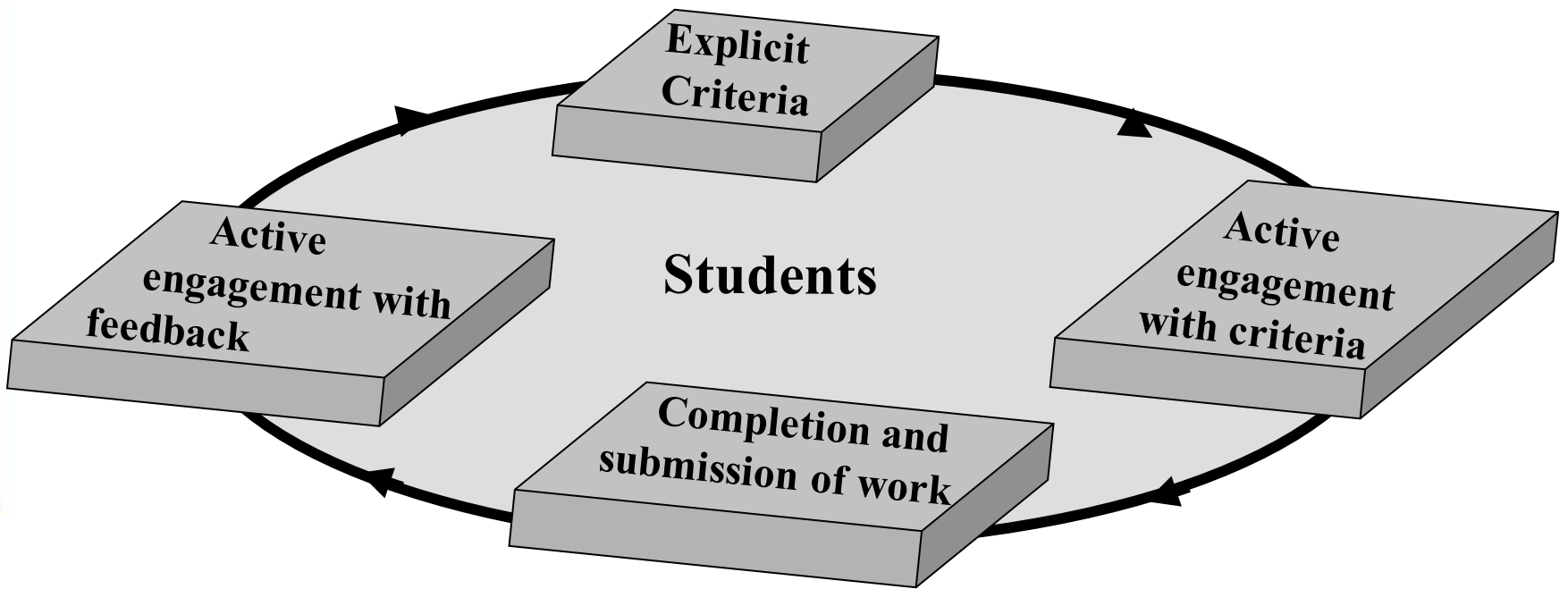
it is the interaction between both believing in self-responsibility and using assessment formatively that leads to greater educational achievements (Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008)

Improving feedback - prepare students (in Yr 1 esp.)

- ❑ Aligning expectations (of staff & students, & between teams of markers)
 - often a mismatch of expectations e.g. correcting errors, advice for the future, diagnosis of general problems, comments specific only to that piece of work. These mismatches occur frequently with no particular pattern about who holds which view/perspective but problems arise when the two don't coincide. Purpose of feedback may vary from assignment to assignment so would need to be clarified each time. (Freeman & Lewis, 1998)
- ❑ Identifying all feedback available (especially oral)
- ❑ Model the application of feedback
 - e.g. using previously-marked assignments to show how feedback was used (or consider how used) to improve later assignments
- ❑ Encourage the application of feedback
 - e.g. in a subsequent piece of work the student is required to show how they have used prior feedback to try to improve their work (and possibly some marks allocated for this).
- ❑ Require and develop self-assessment

Improving feedback - ensure it is fit for purpose

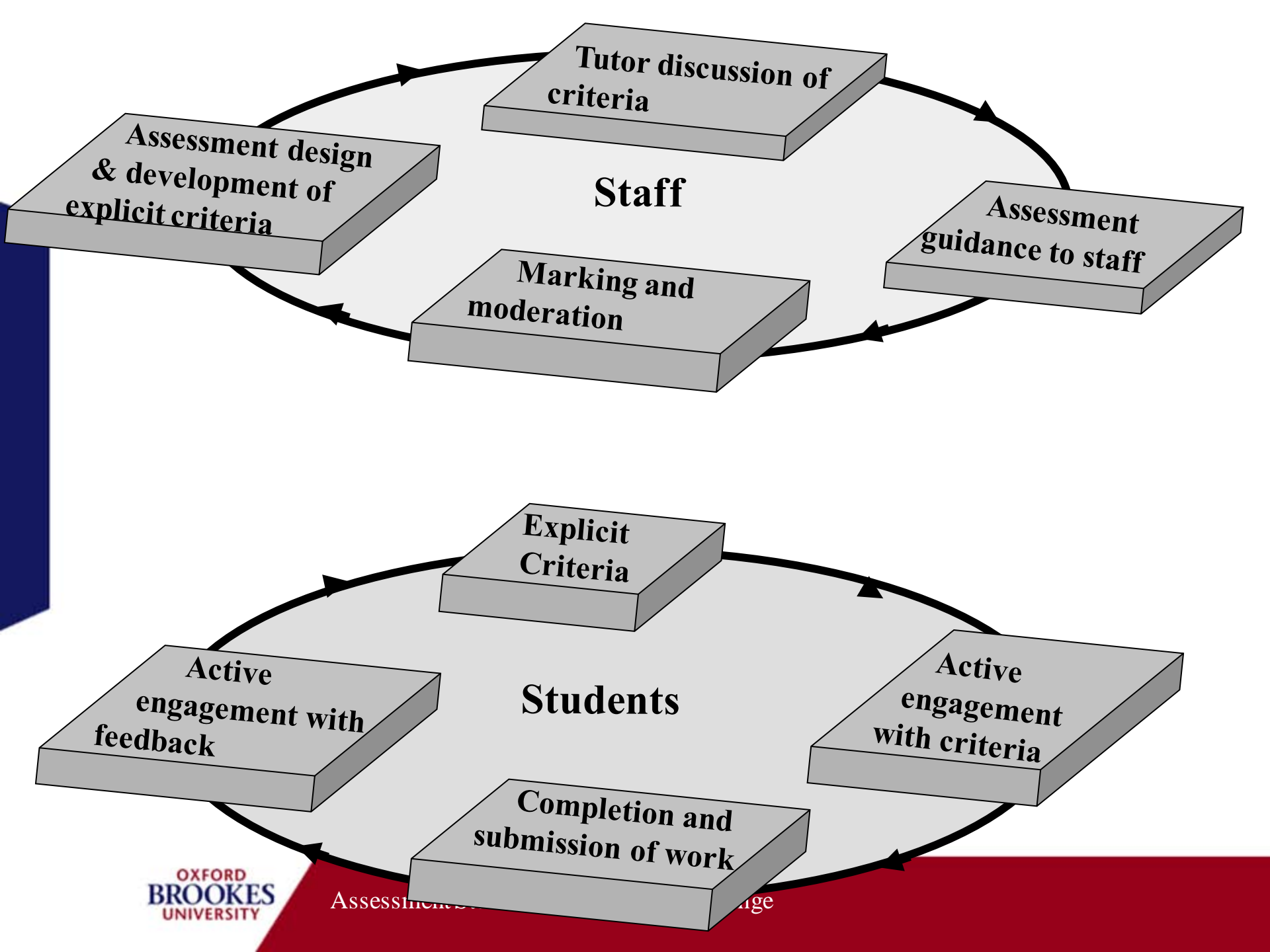
- ❑ Ensure students have MOM - Motive, Opportunity, Means (Angelo, 2007)
- ❑ Draft-plus-rework - feedback effort (for markers and students) is located at the draft stage, and possibly only a summative grade is given for the final submission
- ❑ Improve the linkage of assessment strategies across programmes and between modules/units
- ❑ Increase student engagement and understanding through dialogue - in-class discussion of exemplars, peer-review discussions supported by tutors, learning-sets, etc.
- ❑ Identify what is feasible in a given assessment context - written feedback can often do little more than 'diagnose' development issues and then direct students to other resources for help and support
- ❑ Ensure it is timely - 'quick and dirty' generic feedback, feedback on a draft, MCQs & quizzes, etc. (using technology may help)
- ❑ Consider the role of marks - they obscure feedback
- ❑ Reduce over-emphasis on written feedback - oral can be more effective (McCune, 2004). But individual F2F can be resource intensive
- ❑ Review resource allocations (N.B. OU 60%)



At its simplest, need two conceptual shifts

1. Self and peer assessment need to be seen as essential graduate attributes (i.e. learning outcomes themselves, rather than simply processes)
2. Feedback needs to be seen as a dialogue (rather than a monologue)

... with an explicit intention to bring students into the community of assessment practice



Rust C., O'Donovan B
& Price., M (2005)

