Assessment criteria with consensus are authentic: students as partners in assessment grading and feedback
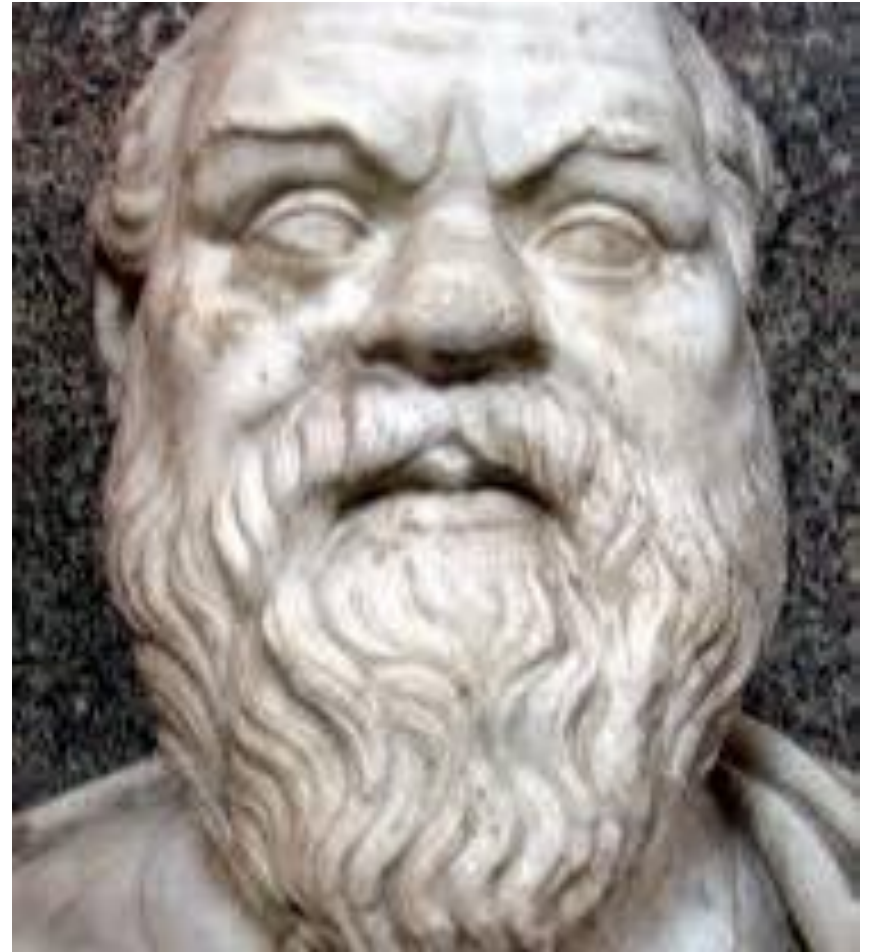
Presented by

Lizzie Lerpinière & Connor Gibson

- Lizzie Lerpinière

- Connor Gibson
  - Students at Abertay
  - Members of the PS0924 Applied Psychology class 2014-2015

Dr Siobhan MacAndrew

Socrates butting in

(Keep it short Siobhan!!!)

- Class of PS0924 Applied Psychology
  - 3rd year students at Abertay University
  - Various ages including mature students

Democracy in assessment design?

- What are your opinions?

- Can this work?

Students first impressions

Our module

- PS0924 consisted of both 'lectures' and 'tutorials' like other module

- BUT DIFFERENT - lectures had nothing to do with the assessment.

- Assessment for the module was a group poster, followed by an ungraded poster conference presentation

Creating criteria and module handbook

Students got in to groups and decided what each grade meant to them.

They also decided what should be included in the module handbook.

The assessment criteria for this module was a collaboration between the Dr MacAndrew and the class of PS0924.

The resulting collaboration contained inputs from the students on how they felt their work should be graded, and what they believed wouldn't be acceptable.

Rd. MacAndrew's input made sure the criteria met the standards expected by Abertay University

University marking criteria

- Very vague

- Open to interpretation

Our marking policy

- Directly relates to our module

- Linked to UAD's system and the literal marking policy

The assessment

- Created posters on how psychology could be applied to a real world issue of their choice.

- Posters created by the students were A0 size and were created in academic style – *but accessible to lay person*

What was required to make a poster in this module?

Own choice of topic

Group work

Shared mark

Learned by doing

Summative work

- P2p feedback online
  - The students, through randomisation on Blackboard, were given the opportunity to review and give feedback on other group's presentations
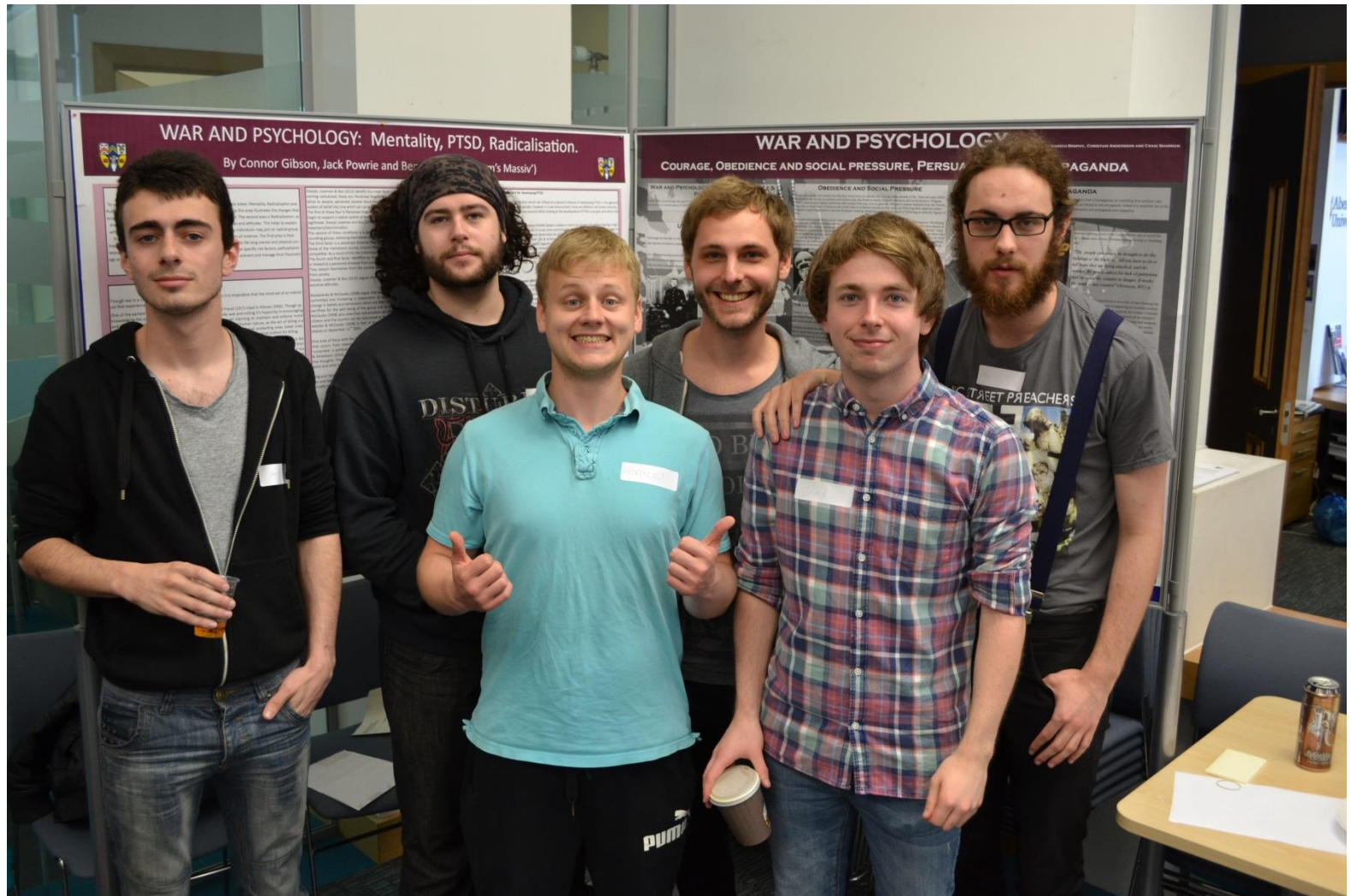
  - Happened prior to submission

Poster Conference

- Connor & myself were involved in planning the conference.

- We sent invitations to the VIP's of the university – Principal, Head of School, UADSA Vice President

- Groups presented their posters to the guests, answered questions and discussed their learning.

Photos of the event

Students explain eating disorders to Principal Nigel Seaton

Students with their poster on War and Psychology

Poster on depression in academic life

Student discusses disclosure of mental illness in the workplace with our University Secretary

How do you think it went?

- All students attained a First Class or a 2:1 classification in this assessment.

Student Teaching Research Group

Throughout the module, 9 of us met weekly to conduct research in to how the module was running and what students' opinions were.

Good or bad?

How information on student opinion was gathered:

- –Interview

- –Statements

- –Focus groups

What we found was…

Enhances student engagement

- Students find it easier to learn when they are heavily engaged in the process.

- Allowed us to host lectures, which for many was a first.

Improves understanding

- Required us to look for the psychology within the content ourselves, and find issues and messages on our own.

- each student came away with a unique understanding of the content, rather than all receiving the exact same information, being told what it means and where the psychology lies.

Encourages development of graduate attributes

To achieve good marks in the assessment, students were forced to learn how to work in a team, delegate tasks and manage their time.

- Good stepping stone for both 4th year Honours Projects and later life

- As the assessment wasn't related to the lectures, students were required to conduct independent academic research on their own time.

During the lectures, each student was offered the opportunity to host the guest speaker and lecture. This required a maturity level and a level of confidence in their own social skills.

Shows trust in students

- University level – not high school anymore

- Should be expected to be more involved – learning is expected to happen independently outwith the classroom to build on lecture content. Why not incorporate this skill within the module?

- Gives students the freedom to exhibit how much they have learned in previous years.

Applies psychology

- This may be specific to our module only, but the manner in which this module ran actually meant students had to *apply their knowledge of psychology*.

There are issues however…

Better to have at an earlier stage in the course – should be integrated as part of the whole learning experience, rather than being something at the end.

From Siobhan's point of view..

Was keen on incorporating *Discovery Based Learning* in to her teaching.

BUT

Students prefer to be aware of all material and dates right at the start of the module. So there are no surprises to students, as they are already primed for each lecture and assessment.

- Siobhan underestimated how long it would take to design a new and very innovative module.

- UAD module descriptors written a year before module starts – she inherited it

- Change is hard to implement quickly at UAD

Discovery Based Learning is genuinely scary for students

Found it really difficult when they didn't know what was going to happen or what to expect.

This module may not work if the university as a whole solely uses traditional teaching methods.

- This module was an elective – chosen 'sight unseen'

- Students should perhaps have been made aware of the skills and time that this module will demand, as well as what will be asked/expected of them.

- But module descriptor written a year ahead

- Carry out in earlier years
  - With earlier years, the grades are not counted towards the final degree classification
  - Early practice will lessen the pressure on the students
  - help them to better engage later in their studies with the learning challenges of the module

- There were some issues with marking criteria
  - Most agreed working with the tutor to create a marking criteria that was understood by all was a benefit
  - although some students felt that this extra control was unnecessary or pointless.

From interview with student

- *Obviously we did go through it and things went up on Blackboard, but I felt it was a bit like "what would you guys do? That doesn't matter anyway cause I'm going to mark it the way that I want to. Which is fine, [you] have to stick to the basic guidelines"*

We spoke to our classmates after the module..

It helped me understand what Siobhan was looking for in terms of our assignment, and helped me realise the amount of work that needed to go in to the project to reach the rough cut off points for each grade.

–Nikki Howarth

Being given the opportunity to have input in the assessment of the module was refreshing. It meant that the students were heavily involved in the designing of the module and so we were more engaged in it. Helping to write the grading criteria meant that students were more aware of what they needed to do in order to achieve the top grades and showed that their opinions were valued. However, it was important that the standard university marking criteria was followed and that students knew that the standard 'rules' were still being adhered to as well as their suggested criteria.

- Jem Boswell

Being involved in creating the marking criteria really helped me understand what goals the teacher, class, and myself believed we needed to achieve in our academic posters. These criteria kept our group on track when we were researching and designing our poster.

- Tieri Saggers

Asking students to create their own marking criteria was quite a novel and challenging task. Students were not used to being asked to reflect on how their work is evaluated. They came up with specific and general points, and finished the task with a clear understanding of what a good assessment entails. I believe making students responsible for their marking criteria promotes autonomous learning and should be implemented more often.

- Vilja Niitamo

I often find that the marking criteria can be too vague so I found that the student involvement was a great idea. I knew exactly what had to be done to receive a good grade

- Kelly Murray

To conclude…

- At a university aim to increase autonomy and self-awareness.

- Students at this stage of education are expected to be able to think for themselves and develop key attributes employers look for in graduates.

- Surely, then, giving students greater control over their own education is an obvious step in the right direction?

- Student involvement in assessment grading and feedback ensures that not only they are engaging in the content, they are attaining better grades too.

- Creating own criteria requires a level of maturity that is otherwise perhaps not measured.

Thanks for listening