# APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

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# WE HAVE JUST OVER AN HOUR BUT…

- I've run modules on this comprising three days of teaching…

- There are no fancy slides – just enough to facilitate our discussions

# MY INTENTIONS THIS MORNING

- To be informal

- To be informative about the direction of travel at Ulster (and actually the sector too)

# OUTLINE OF SESSION

- A quick potted account of curriculum design as a process

- Overall reasons for ongoing change

- Overall approach in relation to timing

- A discussion around two sorts of design principles

  - 'Product' design principles

  - 'Process' design principles

- Changing the degree award algorithm

- Questions

- But not necessarily in that order!

# WHAT IS CURRICULUM DESIGN?

- The Academic Practice of designing (higher education) programmes

- <u>Noun</u> – the design

  - Programme specification etc.

- <u>Verb</u> – the process of design, the underpinning activities

Equally applies to redesign/re-approval

**Market research**

**Programme Philosophy**

**Programme Aims**

Involve:

- Employers
- Professional bodies
- Programme team
- Wider programme team
- Students

**Programme Philosophy**

**Programme Aims**

Should include considerations of what you want graduates <u>to be able to do</u> in a holistic sense, and what you believe good learning 'looks like'

(Process Design Principles)

# PROCESS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The sector has a lot of experience with this sort of work, including Ulster:

  - Viewpoints

  - PRD


- But we are firming this up a bit now. Broadly it's about expecting effective engagement with stakeholders during the curriculum design process and 'designing-in' certain features into a curriculum.

# OVERALL REASONS FOR CHANGE

- Improving the learning experiences of students – and achieving the outputs that go with that.

- Enhancing the working lives of staff

# PROCESS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- For us these are likely to include:
  - Internationalising the curriculum
  - Designing for the needs of international students
  - Information and digital literacy
  - Sustainability (green agenda)
  - Employability/entrepreneurship
  - Widening participation
  - Research-informed teaching
  - Enquiry-based learning
  - Active learning pedagogies
  - [and to achieve these through better stakeholder engagement]

At least five of your choosing?

# PROCESS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Enacting these at Ulster

  - Moving from conversation to expectation to requirement

  - Reviewing responses to the principles at the point of review/approval (at validation/revalidation events)

  - We'll want evidence/testimony of how the activities have informed the end design (product)

  - They take quite a bit of time to do properly

  - People will need support and guidance

# PRODUCT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **This about changing expectations around the outputs of the design process (design as a noun)**

    - **Mainly about changes to modules**

    - **Especially in relation to assessment**

    - **It's the main way we can have a positive impact on the working lives of staff (as well as the learning experiences of students)**

# PRODUCT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **<u>Modules should generally be designed at a minimum of 20cr</u>**

  - Bigger modules simplify programme delivery

  - Bigger modules tend to lead to greater curriculum integration

  - Bigger modules tend to lead to lower assessment levels across a programme

  - There can be exceptions with justification

**Your thoughts/questions?**

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES (PRODUCT)

- **<u>Modules should generally have no more than FOUR learning outcomes</u>**

  - **We won't be using KIPT at module level**

  - **Fewer learning outcomes lead to more manageable assessment**

  - **There can be exceptions with justification**

**Your thoughts?**

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES (PRODUCT)

- **<u>A module should not normally have more than TWO items of assessment.</u>**

- An 'item of assessment' is something that yields a mark that goes forward onto the student record system.

- If you have a portfolio assessment with three parts and the marks for those parts get amalgamated into a single mark, then this is one item of assessment – not three.

- There needs to be a rationale as to why the assessment is a portfolio and not three assessments – i.e. they are linked in some way – stages in a larger assessment piece.

# NUMBER AND SIZE

- Two items of assessment is enough for any module – no matter the size of the module.

- 2000 words (or equivalent) per 10 credits should be considered a normal maximum – for any academic level!

- 'or equivalent' is a judgement call.

- Choices made here have a profound effect on your working lives.
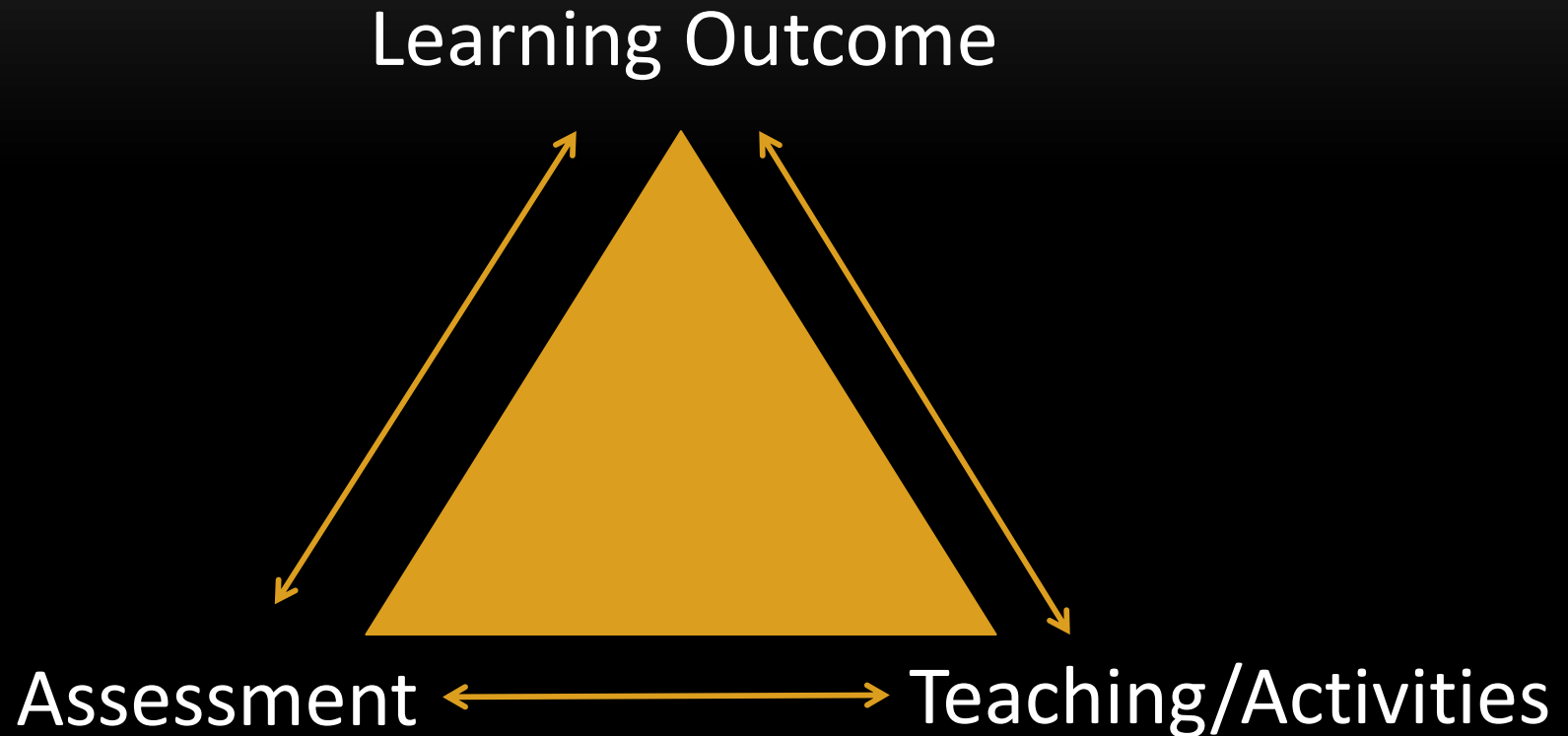
**Your thoughts?**
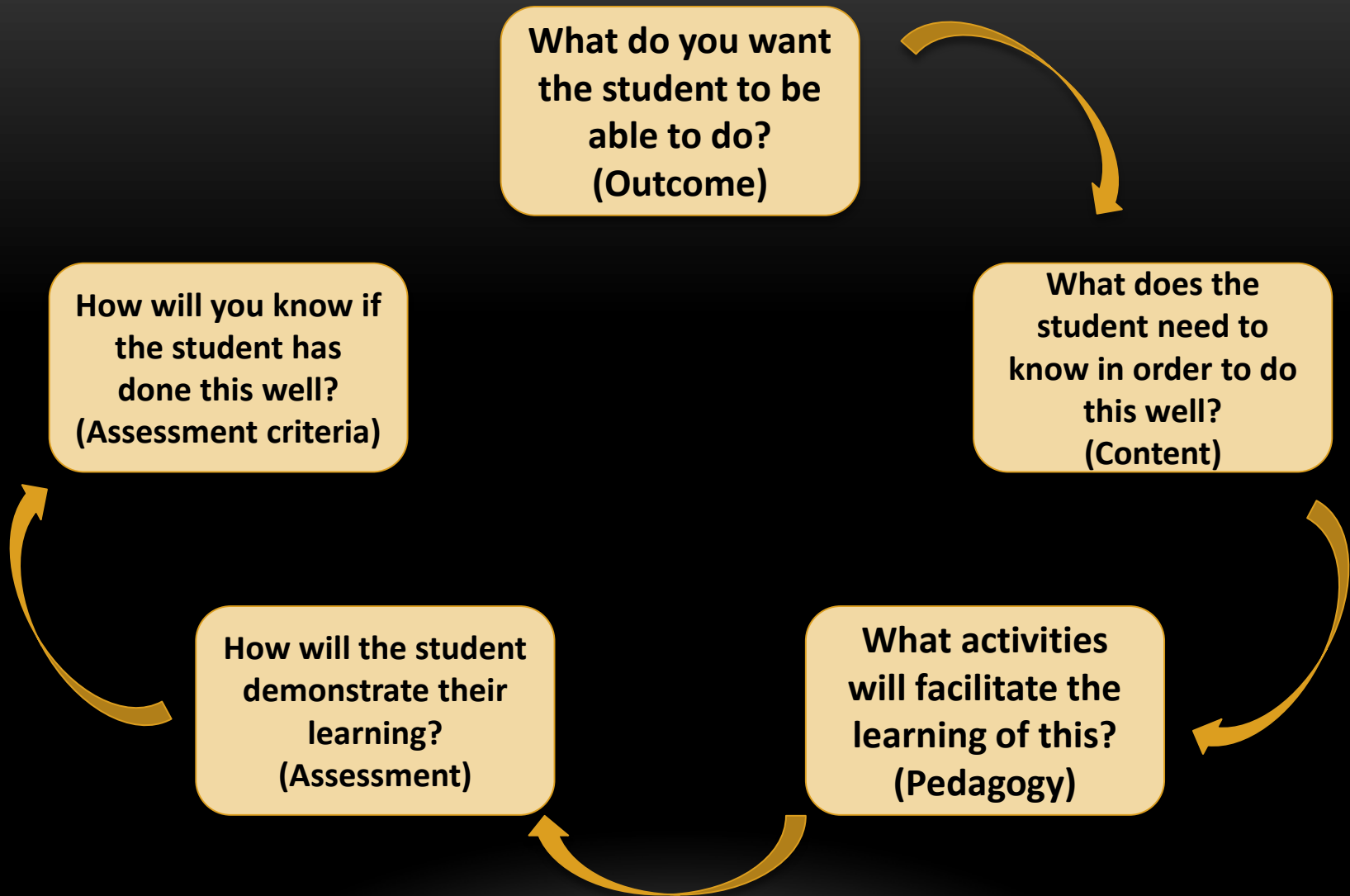
# CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT

**The essential design element**

**And why I want to ask for an assessment briefing and a marking scheme for each non-invigilated assessment item at the point of approval/revalidation**

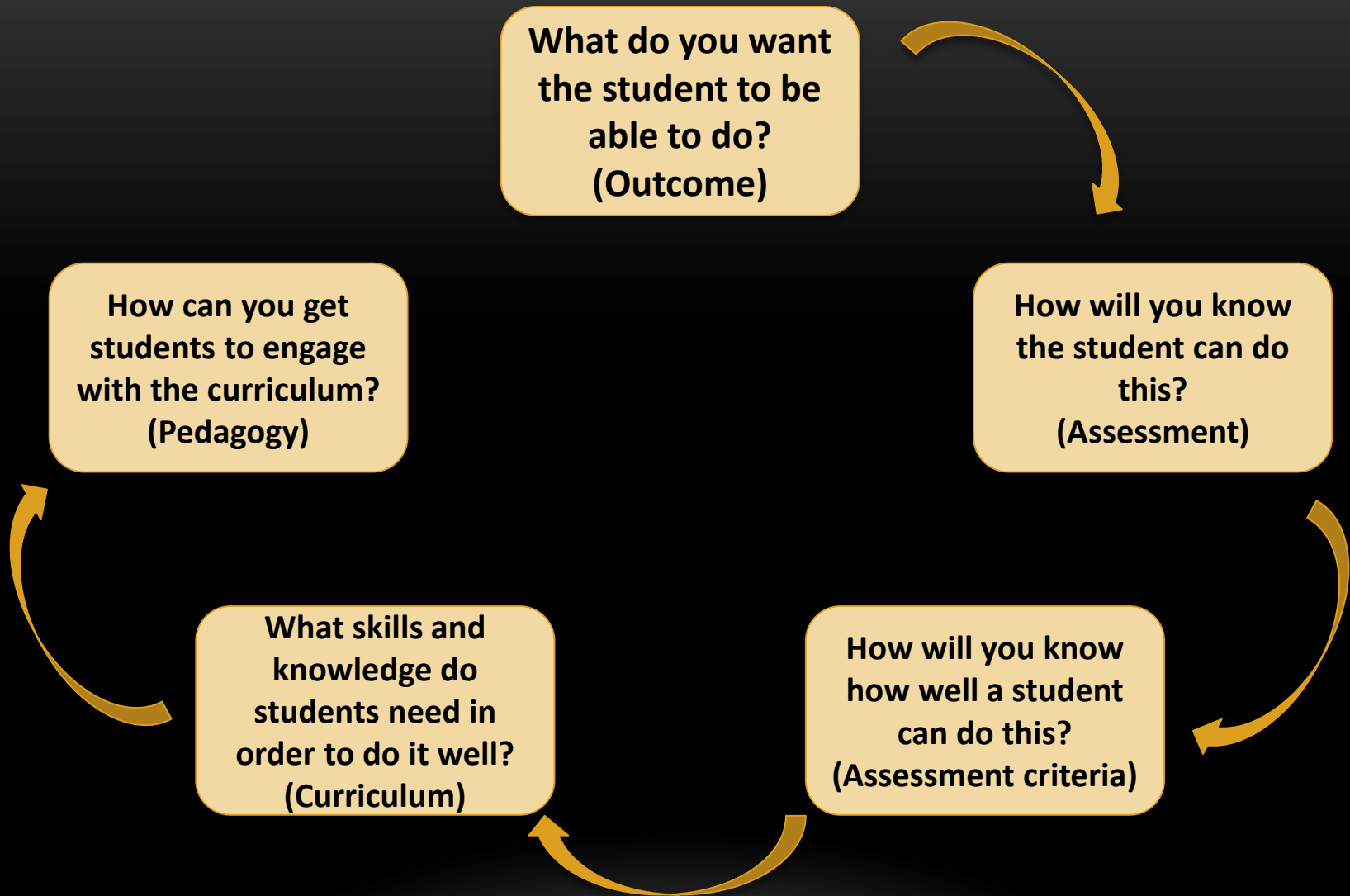# CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT

Learning Outcome

Assessment  ⟷  Teaching/Activities

This is for an objectives based curriculum model

Assessment of learning approach? Tutor-centric approach?

Assessment for learning approach? Student-centric approach?

# SO….

- You haven't designed a module until you've designed the assessment.

- You haven't designed the assessment until you've designed the marking scheme.

- Designing the marking scheme clarifies what 'good looks like'.

- Knowing what good looks like helps you fine-tune your learning outcomes and gives you a guide as to what and how to teach.

# SUMMATIVE AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- There should **always** be formative assessment opportunities within a module.

- A formative assessment is just that, it shapes the students' learning. Thus, a formative assessment without feedback is not really formative.

- It is quite appropriate to give some marks for formative assessment if you want to.

- Formative assessment is also for us as academics; it lets us know how the cohort are doing and whether we need to make any interventions.

# A WORD ON ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

- Generic rubrics are more trouble than they are worth

- Generic rubrics make it harder to give higher marks as there is a less clear picture of what 'good looks like'

- Generic rubrics do little to help you plan your teaching

- Good rubrics should, *inter alia*, reward creativity

**Your thoughts?**

# A WORD ON EXAMS

- **They have limited utility as an 'assessment for learning' approach**

- **They make less sense for the new degree award algorithm proposal (more later)**

- **They often come with an overhead multiplier to accommodate reasonable adjustments**

- **They are generally too prevalent across programmes – we need to diversify more.**

**Your thoughts?**

# A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW DEGREE AWARD ALGORITHM. EITHER:

|          | Now  | Option 1 | Option 2 |
|----------|------|----------|----------|
| Year 3(F) | 100% | 60%      | 60%      |
| Year 2   | 0%   | 40%      | 30%      |
| Year 1   | 0%   | 0%       | 10%      |

Our students will choose

# A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW DEGREE AWARD ALGORITHM

- No student would be disadvantaged – so it could be brought in quickly.

- Exit velocity is still highly weighted

- PSRB requirements will still take priority

# WE HAVE MODELED IMPACT

| Sample size | 238 |
|---|---|
| Number of award marks increased | 83 |
| % of award marks increased | 34.47% |
| Average award mark Increase | 0.61 |
| Maximum award mark increase | 7.6 |
| No of uplifts in classification | 10 |
| % uplift in classification | 4.2% |

**This is retrospective without any predictions for changes in behaviour**

# GETTING IT DONE

- We plan to use the natural points of review. (Validation/revalidation)

- Revalidations will be brought forwards for programmes below certain performance thresholds.

- These will be supported activities and be developmental in nature.

- There will be some new thresholds related to market viability.

# FAQS

- What about those programmes coming up for approval/reapproval soon?

  - Have a discussion with me – I'd like to empower you but I'm conscious I don't want to move goal posts on staff either.

- When will the new degree algorithm come into force?

  - That's still being discussed – but hopefully for the Summer graduations

- Who will support programme teams?

  - Professional services – particularly CHERP

# ANY QUESTIONS OR FURTHER POINTS FOR DISCUSSION?

Thank you!