

# Alignment and Mapping: Helping to Make Meaning

Assessment Institute October 2016

Dr Karen Ford, University of Sheffield, UK

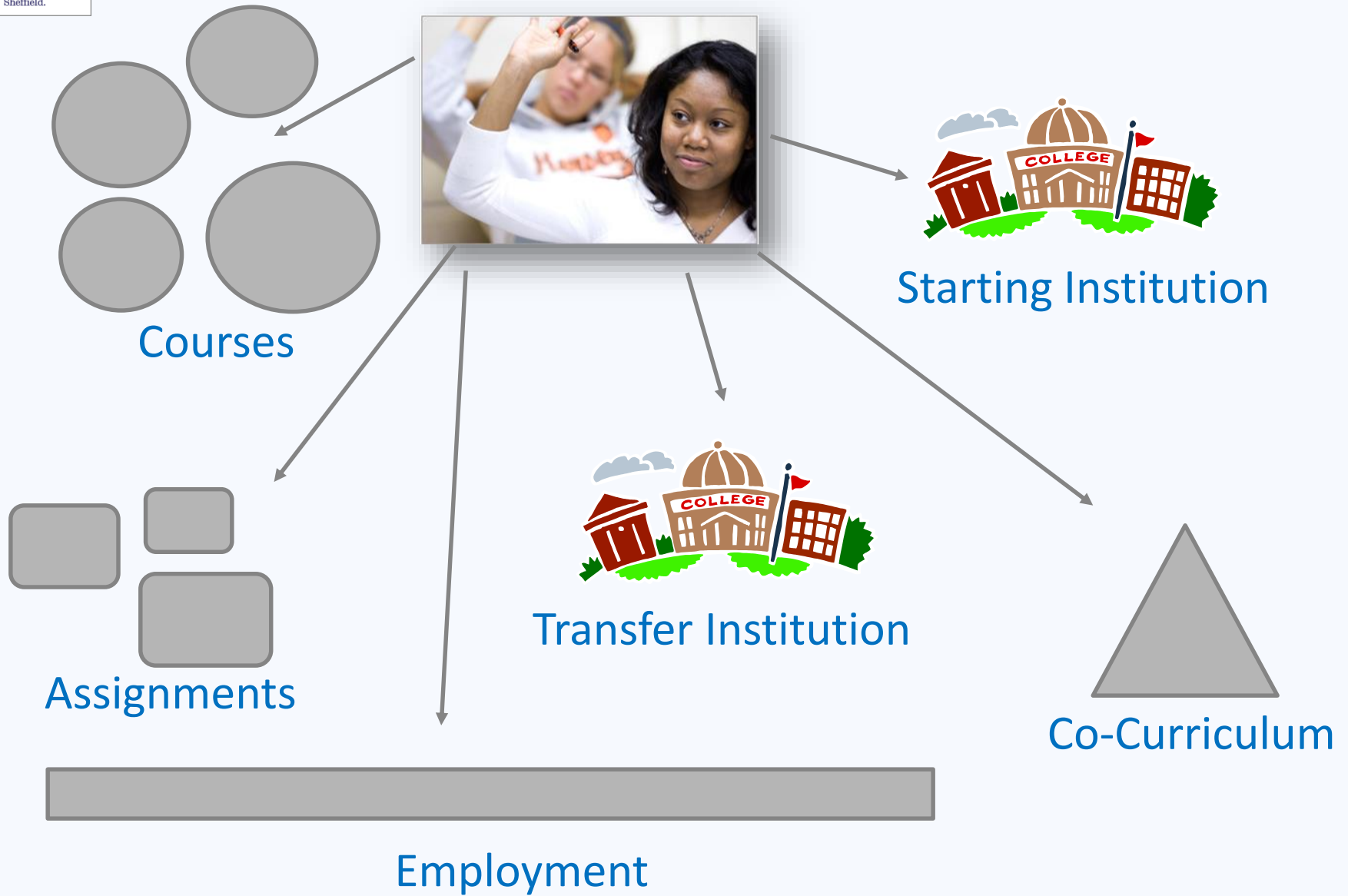
David W. Marshall, PhD NILOA & CSUSB

# The Plan

- The Problem of Alignment
- Aligning Expectations & Assignments
- Defining & Doing *Alignment*

# Core Question

Is the design of our educational experiences, environments, and institutions in alignment with our current student population?



## CURRENT STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# Alignment by Proxy

- 2-year/4-year Course Descriptions
- Intellectual Skills & Employability Skills
- Learning Outcomes and Course Design
- Course Content and Assignments

**Alignment is assumed by proximity**

# Premise

- We make assumptions about what we collectively ‘know’ about assessment, its value and purposes
- It can be challenging (and uncomfortable) to discuss our ‘judgement’ processes
- We need to engage in conversations to reach a shared understanding of the challenges and practicalities associated with striving for valid, reliable, aligned and transparent assessment to support learning

# The activity

- Shared marking experience (experiential and immersive)
- Flaws & challenges ‘designed in’
- Something everyone can ‘judge’ easily with limited (or no) experience from any discipline
- Facilitates discussion and sharing of practice and shared meaning

# Focus areas

- Constructive Alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011)
- Highlights issues associated with striving for valid, reliable, aligned and transparent assessment
- Raises awareness of processes and strategies which can support this (e.g. ‘standardisation’, moderation etc.)
- Promotes assessment literacy (staff and learners)



# The session...

# Learning outcome

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

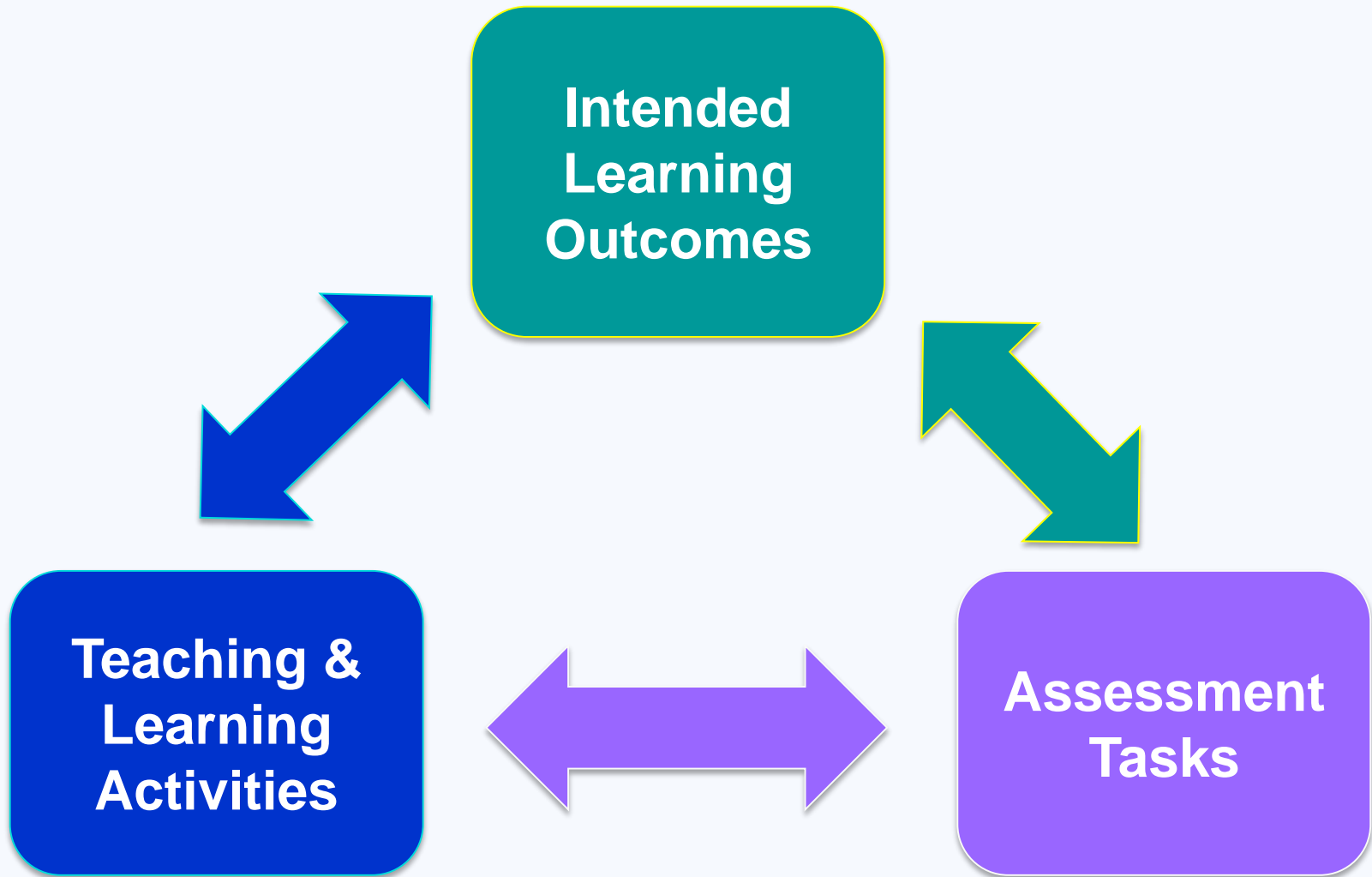
**Discuss how to assess student work accurately and fairly**

# Assessment: Key concepts

**Validity: The assessor is measuring what the assessment is intended to measure**

Reliability: Consistent marking - as an individual and among markers

# Constructive Alignment Biggs & Tang (2011)



# Validity

- So how can we ensure the assessor (you as marker) is measuring what the assessment is intended to measure?
- **Time to do some marking...**

# The design brief

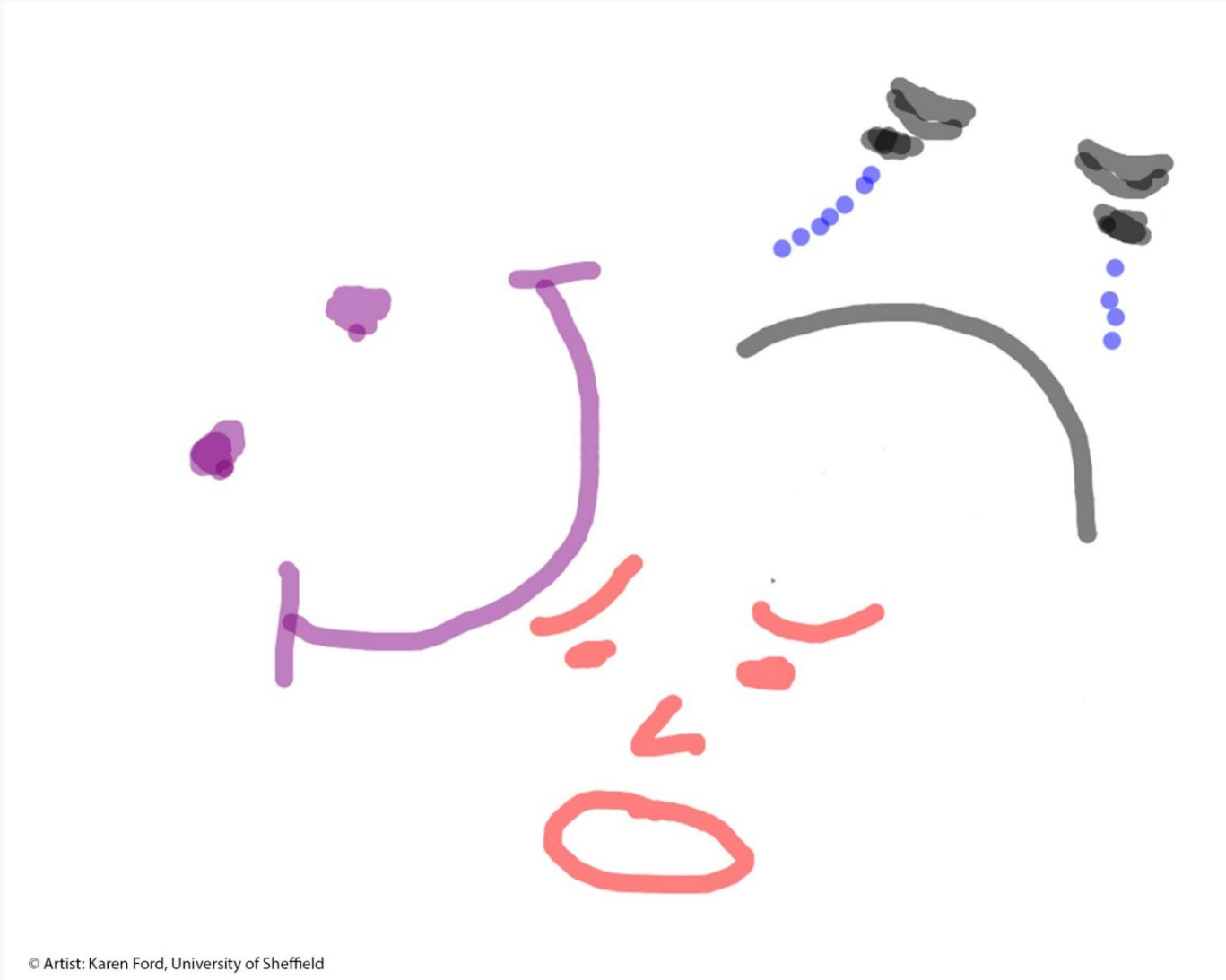


Create an illustration for a greeting card using the theme “Emotions”. The illustration should use a range of colours and the design should be flexible to enable adaptation to a range of card formats.

# Grade the illustration

- Merit?
- Pass?
- Fail?





© Artist: Karen Ford, University of Sheffield



# Marking outcome questions

- Did we all agree on the grade to be awarded?
- Why, why not?
- If we all agree, have we marked accurately?
- Ask yourself how would we know? (think about evidence)
- Marked again with Intended Learning Outcomes

# What were we measuring (outcomes)?

- Communicates specific emotions clearly
- Uses an appropriate range of emotions
- Uses a range of colours
- Uses space in a flexible way to enable adaptation to alternative card formats
- **Mark again using these**



© Artist: Karen Ford, University of Sheffield

- Communicates specific emotions clearly
- Uses an appropriate range of emotions
- Uses a range of colours
- Uses space in a flexible way to enable adaptation to alternative card formats

# Marking outcome

- Did we all agree on the grade to be awarded?
- Why, why not?
- If we all agree, have we marked accurately?
- **What else** do we need to know?

# Assessment criteria specify

- The evidence used to determine the **achievement** of the learning outcomes
- Evidence used to determine the **level** of achievement

Descriptor	Merit	Pass	Fail
<b>Clarity of emotions</b>	Emotions are clearly identifiable with viewers highly likely to agree on all of the emotions represented, ambiguity is very unlikely.	Emotions are clearly identifiable with viewers highly likely to agree on some of the emotions represented, but a level of ambiguity is evident.	Emotions are not clearly identifiable with viewers highly unlikely to agree on any of the emotions represented; a high level of ambiguity is evident.
<b>Range of emotions</b>	More than four different emotions are evident (the artist has attempted to represent more than three).	Three different emotions are evident (the artist has attempted to represent three).	Less than three different emotions are evident (the artist has not attempted to represent more than two)
<b>Use of colour</b>	More than four colours have been used (not including the background).	Three or four colours have been used (not including the background).	Less than two colours have been used (not including the background).
<b>Use of space</b>	The illustration fits within the chosen format (rectangle or square or circle) and could fit in either of the other formats with little or no work required.	The illustration fits within the chosen format (rectangle or square or circle) but some work would be required to adapt the illustration to fit in either of the other formats.	The illustration fits poorly within the chosen format (rectangle or square or circle) and a significant amount would be required to adapt the illustration to fit in either of the other formats.



© Artist: Karen Ford, University of Sheffield

# How did we do this time?

- Did we all agree?
- What issues does this raise for you?
- What can you do about them?

This leads to discussions about reliability and processes e.g. standardisation, moderation



# How does this activity help make meaning?

## Feedback and impact thus far...

# Sharing of actual practice

- Discussion starts around the experiences from the marking activity but soon morphs into lively transdisciplinary discussion:
  - Approaches from a range of disciplines
  - True confessions and ‘horror’ stories
  - Problems experienced and resolved in practice
- This is followed by broader discussions about assessment and feedback practices

# Feedback

- “The little exercise in this session was good for demonstrating key issues regarding marking and marking criteria. Although I am not designing a new course I think anyone who was, would have found this very useful.”
- “Useful to think about criteria for assessment and learning about the mark schemes which other departments use. Also really helpful to learn tips for giving feedback - I now feel more comfortable doing this”
- “I did not fully appreciate the depth of the nature of assessment and feedback and how it can be used”
- “The discussion in this session was very helpful, albeit confirming some of my own concerns about how messy assessment is!”

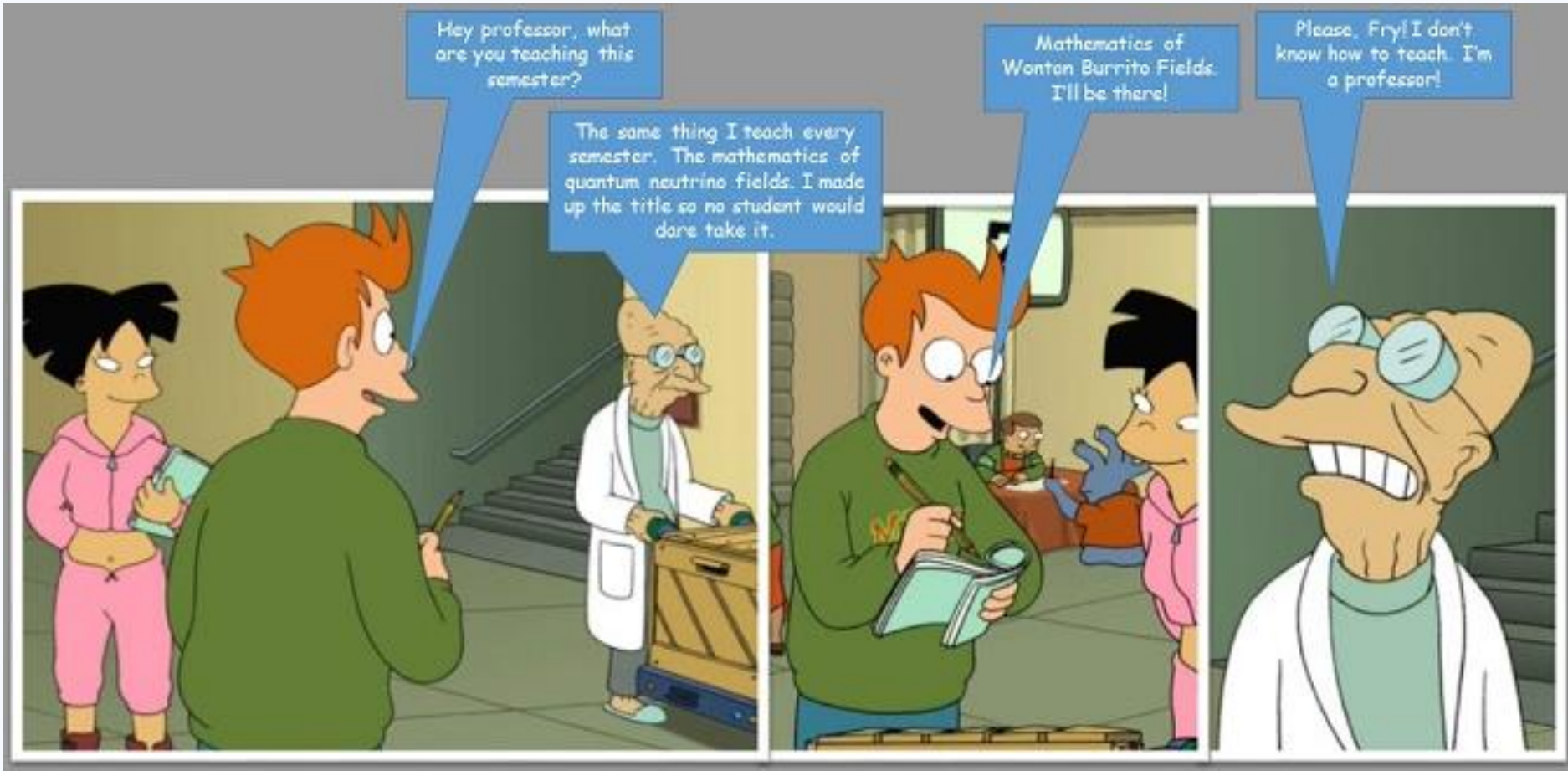
# Impact (anecdotal evidence)

- Establishing ‘standardisation’ using exemplars to support markers from the outset (Architecture)
- Designing aligned lab sessions and associated feedback protocol to support consistent provision (Engineering)
- Using exemplars to support student assessment literacy (Management)
- Bring together a new programme team to discuss assessment and feedback practices (Advanced Manufacturing)

# Why has it facilitated discussion?

- Innocuous but engaging activity
  - Immersive and experiential – does the act of judging facilitate personal investment?
- The simplicity of the activity
  - Provides a common reference point
  - Enables articulation of the underlying principles and concepts across disciplines
  - Reveals the complexities of assessment

# Implications...



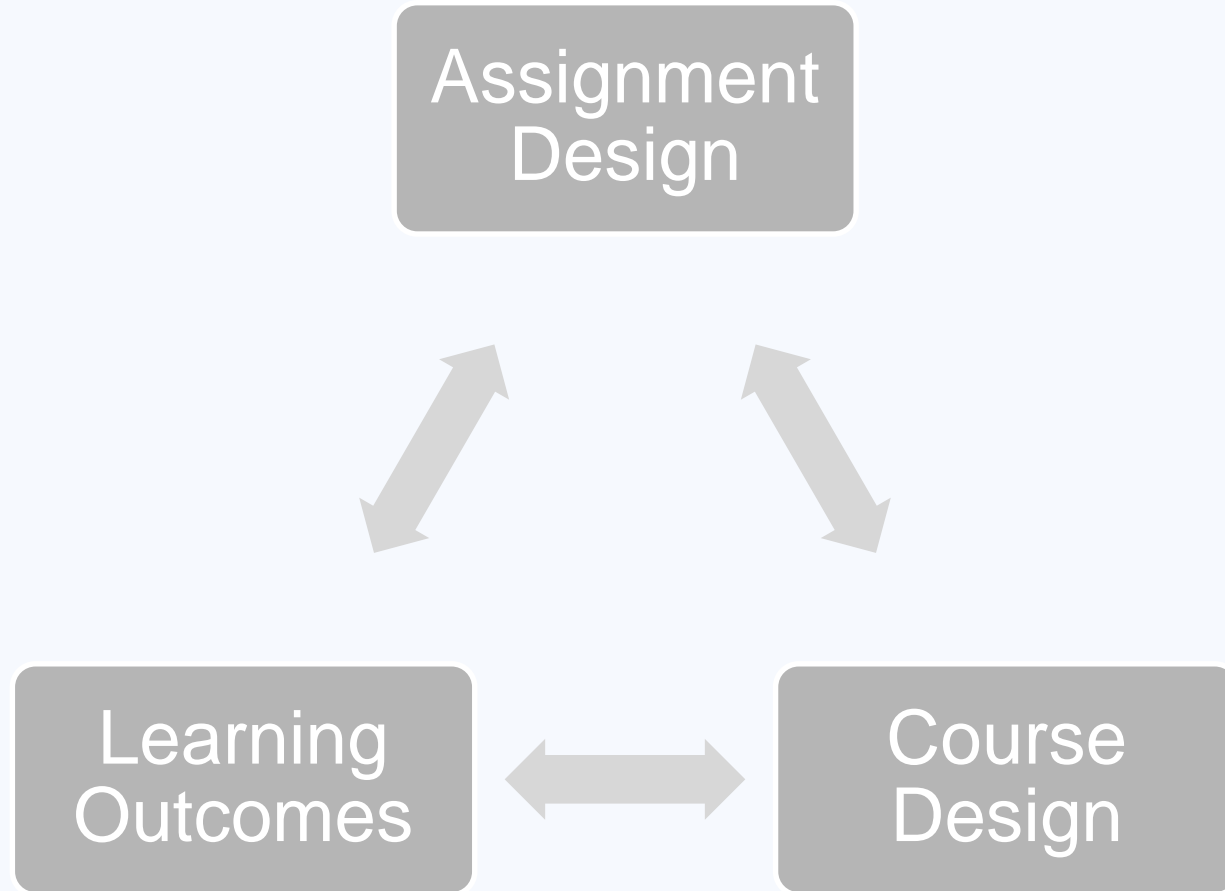
# Connecting to Mapping

Mapping is a process of:

- reflecting on structures and practice
- collaborating among stakeholders
- building shared understanding
- identifying relationships
- **dismantling assumptions**
- **creating intentional alignment**



# Rubrics as Mapping



# Scaling to the Program Level

	<b>PLO1:</b> <b>Identify the major writers, periods, and genres of British and American literature with sufficiency to explain the importance of works and genres within their historical contexts and over time.</b>		
	<b>SLO 1.1:</b> Identify major writers, periods, and genres of British & American literature	<b>SLO 1.2:</b> Explain the use of genres within the literary culture of a given period of British & American literature	<b>SLO 1.3:</b> Comparatively interpret authors' use of genre in works from two periods of British & American literature
British Literature I and II	I Objective Exam	I Course Essay	
Studies in a Literary Period	D Wiki Project	D Group Project	I Essay Exam
Studies in a Literary Theme		M Analytical Paper	D Analytical Paper
Culminating Course	M Research Paper		

# Broadening Mapping

- Internal course elements
- Elements across programs

# Broadening Mapping

- Internal course elements
- Elements across programs
- Student learning to work-study experiences
- Academic programs to co-curriculum
- Course-taking patterns
- Assessment strategies across campus

# References

- Biggs, J.B. & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 4th ed.

# Thank You

Karen Ford: [k.ford@Sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.ford@Sheffield.ac.uk)

David W. Marshall: [dmarshall@csusb.edu](mailto:dmarshall@csusb.edu)