

## USING THE EAT FRAMEWORK

**The EAT Framework** with its emphasis on equity, agency, and transparency in assessment, integrates theoretical perspectives from across disciplines and provides a route map to thinking through steps in the development and evaluation of assessment practices to align educators and students inside the learning process (Forsythe, 2017).

The assessment framework comprises **three interconnected dimensions of practice: assessment literacy, assessment feedback, and assessment design**. Within each of the dimensions, there are **four sub-dimensions, comprising twelve sub-dimensions in total**. Each dimension is covered in detail in Evans (2016, 2020).

**Assessment design** sub-dimensions address:

- (i) the rules and processes surrounding assessment;
- (ii) what constitutes meaningful assessment;
- (iii) ensuring inclusive practices; and
- (iv) critical evaluation of practice.

**Assessment literacy sub-dimensions** clarify:

- (i) the requirements of assessment;
- (ii) the links between all components of assessment;
- (iii) roles and responsibilities within assessment, and
- (iv) disciplinary requirements and engagement.

**Assessment feedback sub-dimensions** focus on:

- (i) making assessment accessible;
- (ii) ensuring early opportunities for students to test their understanding;
- (iii) promoting peer engagement;
- (iv) supporting student self- evaluation skills.

The importance of **user** (student, educator, and administrator) **engagement** in creating and authoring assessment practices is central to this approach, where assessment is seen as interactionist; as an individual and a collective endeavour (James, 2014). The interconnectivity of the assessment framework is stressed in that **actions in one area of the framework impact others**, with assessment design being of crucial importance in directing learner and teacher behaviours.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

The integrative assessment framework is original in comprehensively bringing together work on individual differences in learning concerning **how individuals process information** (Evans & Waring, 2009), **self-regulation attributes** and specifically understanding of metacognitive, cognitive and affective dimensions of learning (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999), and **agentic engagement** involving intentionality and willingness coupled with the ability of learners to influence their learning context (Reeve, 2012).

The assessment framework encourages exploration of the impact of assessment practices on learners' access, to, engagement with, and success in assessment from a **critical pedagogies** perspective that examines who is advantaged and disadvantaged through the design of assessment. **Inclusivity** is promoted through a universal design approach (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2018) drawing on information processing, socio-cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives. The dynamic interplay between learner individual characteristics and the environment, and an understanding that some learners are inherently more capable of flexibility in approaches to learning and fluency of processing than others is centred (Kozhevnikov et al., 2014).

Drawing on a **learning cultures approach** (James, 2014), assessment cultures are interrogated to explicate what informs the design and appropriateness of assessment. Learner perceptions' of their ability to inform assessment practices, acknowledging the dynamic nature of curriculum design, are considered from a socio-critical perspective, where power dynamics and agentic mechanisms at the individual, team, and organizational level operate (Butin, 2005). From a **social cognitive perspective** (Bandura, 1977), **learner agency** is promoted through enhanced understanding of relational dynamics (knowledge of self, others, and contexts), with the ultimate objective of promoting learner capacity to make informed judgements about the quality of their own work, rather than being dependent on others (Sadler, 2013). **Communities of practice from a socio-cultural perspective** play a central

role in supporting the development of assessment practices (Wenger, 1998); the issue here is whose views are privileged and why?

From an **information processing perspective**, the assessment framework encourages consideration of the role of established **cognitive and emotional schemas** impacting how learners see and navigate assessment feedback landscapes (Evans, 2013). Drawing on **cognitive load theory** (Sweller, 1994), the assessment framework acknowledges that there are clear limits to cognitive capacity and that how assessment information is organised and presented impacts on the capacity of an individual to manage assessment tasks. Cognitive overload is especially poignant at important transition points such as at entry into HE and this needs to be more readily acknowledged in assessment designs (Friedlander et al., 2011; Seufert, 2018).

Importantly, the assessment framework highlights the role of **learners' epistemological beliefs and conceptions of assessment** in impacting learners' engagement with it (Brown et al., 2016; Orsmond & Merry, 2013). Attention is drawn to how individuals perceive their roles in assessment and the impact of this on expectations and outcomes (Bluic et al., 2011). From an instructional self-regulatory perspective, the assessment framework emphasizes the need to support learner development of metacognitive, cognitive, and emotional regulation skills, and, as part of this, asks how learners are being enabled to manage assessment for themselves. Supporting learners' **emotional regulation of assessment** is critical given its impact on cognitive and metacognitive capacity, and especially learner perceptions of competence (perceived self-efficacy and ability to impact on environment and attain valued outcomes), autonomy (able to take responsibility aligned with one's own sense of self), and relatedness (desire to feel connected to and to be accepted by others) in line with Deci and Ryan's (2008) **self-determination theory**.

### *The Utility of the Assessment Framework*

The assessment framework can be used to inquire and develop research-informed assessment practices:

- it can diagnose and evaluate strengths and weaknesses and gaps in assessment, enhance assessment design, through honing in on the development of specific aspects of practice;
- predict outcomes by exploring relationships between student engagement, assessment design, and student retention and success;
- evaluate the relative effectiveness of assessment feedback practices;
- support student and teacher self-regulatory skills' development.

## **APPLICATION OF THE EAT FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE (Evans & Waring, 2021)**

Use of the assessment framework, as outlined in Figure 1, starts with agreeing what application of the overarching concepts and assessment feedback principles underpinning assessment practices (design, literacy, feedback) looks like.

The concepts underpinning the assessment framework include: (i) **inclusivity** which is facilitated through (ii) a **holistic approach** that considers the lived experience of the learner, (iii) **promotion of learner agency** through the development of self-regulation capacity that supports sustainability, (iv) **sensitivity to context** and the dynamic interrelationships between the learner and the learning context, (v) **partnership** between student and teacher in coming to shared understandings, beliefs, and values, (vi) **team-based design**, (vii) **authenticity and relevance** of assessment design to current and future needs, and at both individual and societal levels.

Using a **five-step process**, users are asked to identify key assessment concerns, and interrogate their practice using a critical pedagogy approach (Waring & Evans, 2015). In each step, users are asked to interrogate the evidence to inform next steps and ensure fidelity to the concepts and principles underpinning assessment practices, acknowledging the interrelated nature of the dimensions of assessment. This iterative and cyclical process enables fine-tuning of assessment linking assessment literacy, feedback and design dimensions as part of this process.

The assessment framework provides a vehicle through which to consider any assessment concern in relation to the dimensions and sub-dimensions of practice, and to consider the nested nature of assessment and how practice at the local level links with program, faculty and institution-wide practices. In doing so, it asks individuals to consider how their assessment practice links to institutional policy, processes and procedures and is agentic in supporting individuals to contribute to the evolution of such processes through using a research-informed approach. Importantly, it allows exploration of assessment at different depths of inquiry in order to support management of immediate needs without compromising longer term plans to address fundamental deep-seated issues with assessment (e.g., progression).

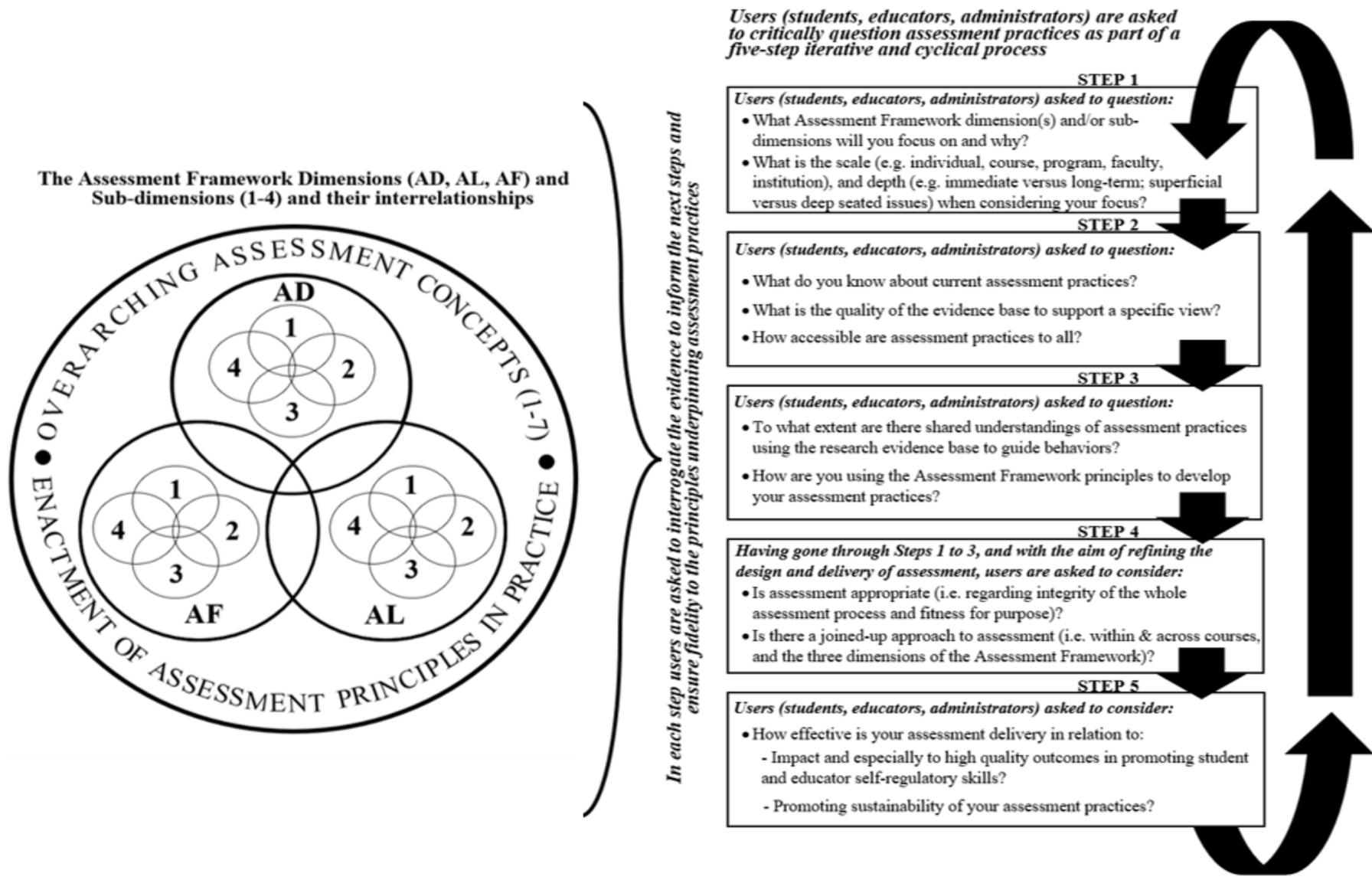


Figure 1 Using the Assessment Framework in Practice