**Considering formative and/or summative assessment of engagement and participation**

Noting examples of module specifications seeking formal approval that incorporate learning outcomes and related summative assessment focused on ‘student engagement and participation’[[1]](#footnote-1) in taught sessions, this guide has been developed to explain the PASC position on related design approaches. This information relates to the real-time tutor-led evaluation of student performance in taught sessions rather than defined classroom-based activity such as formally scheduled student presentation or practical assessment.

Recognising the mandatory nature of attendance requirements of some professional accreditation bodies, PASC **would not** normally support either formative or summative assessment of **engagement,** **participation** or, particularly, **attendance**, for the following key reasons:

* The Design Principles at Aston currently align with accepted sector practice and the expectations of the UK Quality Code. The focus in curriculum design remains on the assessment of outcomes and on clear delineation between learning and assessment activities.
* The Design Principles also frame the expectation of a maximum of two assessment components by module in order to manage staff and student workloads, and assessment of student participation has the potential to add significant granularity and complexity.
* Risk is increased with respect to continuity planning where Module Tutors change or become unavailable and in terms of student absence or extenuating circumstances. Scalability is a further related challenge.
* The ambiguities of defining and understanding “behavioral, affective and cognitive dimensions comprising student engagement” (Mandernach, 2015)[[2]](#footnote-2) present significant design and process challenges in terms of student experience and efficacy of assessment processes.
* Students ‘engage’ in different ways and assessment of ‘engagement’ in taught sessions is fraught with inclusive practice challenges. Any assessment requiring anticipatory or responsive adjustment according to individual student needs is, by definition, not fully inclusively designed. ‘Participation’ is particularly challenging as an active verb in a learning outcome to reflect an appropriate balance of specificity, flexibility and consistency.

PASC always welcomes innovation and progressive practice and this guidance does not mean that assessment of engagement or participation can never be included as an aspect of programme or module design. It just means that PASC would need to see a detailed rationale for the approach being proposed that demonstrates careful consideration and contingency with respect to the design challenges highlighted above. It can be done effectively. It is just extremely difficult to do so fairly, transparently or efficiently.

1. AU-PASC-18-1485-A: 18/177 (23 Nov 2018): <https://vle.aston.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/pid-1460432-dt-content-rid-9458588_1/courses/PASC/AU-PASC-18-1485-A%20%28PASCMinutes23Nov2018%29.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mandernach, B. J. (2015). Assessment of Student Engagement in Higher Education: A Synthesis of Literature and Assessment Tools. International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research. Vol. 12, No 2, pp. 1-14: <https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/367> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)