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TAPPS Assessment Policy Forum

6th October 2026
City Chambers, Glasgow

Overview



- Introduction to the Day and TAPPS Project
- Keynote: Dr Juuso Nieminen, CRADLE, Deakin University
 - *Rethinking inclusive assessment beyond the standard student*
- Lunch & Networking
- Presentation: Findings of the TAPPS Assessment Policy Review
- Panel Discussion:
 - What challenges does current Assessment Policy present in Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys?*
- Discussion:
 - Your views and experiences of the strengths and limitations of current assessment policy in supporting learner diversity, success and skills development*

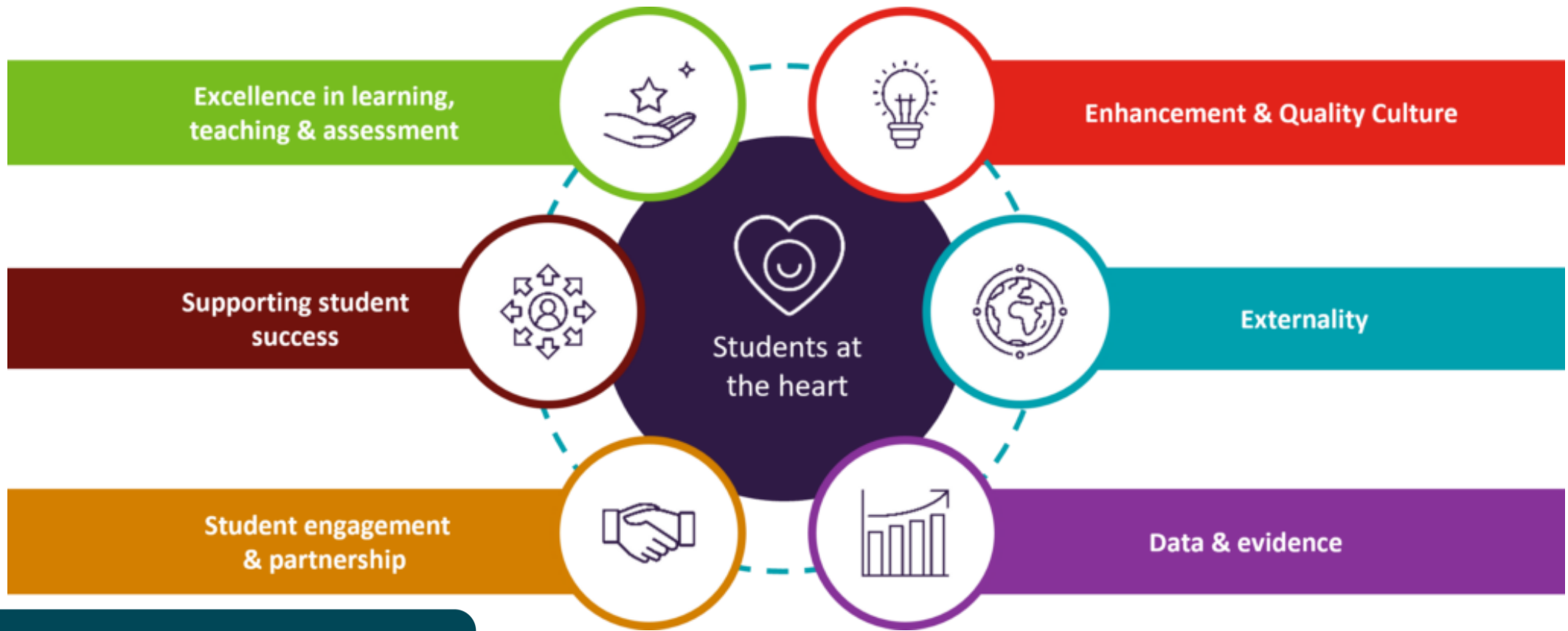


STEP

Scotland's Tertiary
Enhancement Programme

The Scottish Tertiary sector

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)



'Supporting diverse learner journeys'.

The topic underpinned by **four priority areas**:



STEP 2024-2028

'Supporting diverse learner journeys'.

The topic underpinned by **four priority areas**:



Assessment



“Assessment practice needs to transform to allow for further and more diverse methods of assessment (Advance HE, 2019) to be used across the sector **to better accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse student cohort, as well as the evolving skills development requirements of students** to successfully navigate post-educational opportunities via work or further study”.

Project Leads: Edinburgh Napier University & City of Glasgow College

Collaborative Partners: Queen Margaret University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Ayrshire College, West College Scotland.

Project Context

- With **increasing diversity of students** in tertiary education, e.g. background, experience and demographics, there is a **need to ensure assessment practices support student learning**, development and success – rather than hinder.
- Current policy and practice predominantly uses **traditional modes of assessment** which favour students with specific characteristics and demographics (QAA, 2005).
- We need to drive **further diversity in use of assessment formats and methods to better reflect the diversity of students** help ensure fairness, inclusion and skills development (Firth et al. 2023).

Project aims...



To capture existing effective assessment practice to:

- **develop an evidence base** and a portfolio of resources to encourage and **enable policy change**
- **increase awareness and sharing of best practice** from across the Scottish tertiary sector where innovative, inclusive and diverse methods of assessment that are student-centred and recognise growing learner diversity are effectively adopted
- **influence widespread and sustained changes in assessment practice** to benefit student experiences of assessment across the Scottish tertiary sector.

Project Activity and Impact: Year 1

TAPPS Sharing Events across Scotland:

- **City of Glasgow College**
 - **University of St Andrews**
 - **Ayrshire College**
 - **Edinburgh Napier University**
-
- **Keynote presentations:**
 - *Optionality & Flexibility in Assessment* – Dr Miri Firth (University of Manchester)
 - *Neuro-inclusion in Assessment* - Dr Molly Taylor (City of Glasgow College)
 - *Anti-ableism in Assessment* – Dr Sian E. Jones & Dr. Clare Uytman (Queen Margaret University)
-
- **380 registrations** across tertiary sector and diversity of colleagues
 - **27 case studies** of innovative practice submitted



Project Activity and Impact: Year 1



**A summary analysis of relevant literature,
research and scholarship on inclusive student
assessment**

Transforming Assessment Policy and Practice in Scotland
(TAPPS)

September 2026

This is an output from the TAPPS Project as part of STEP (Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme) supported and funded by QAA Scotland and the College Development Network (CDN).

The project is led by the Edinburgh Napier University and City of Glasgow College in partnership with Queen Margaret University, University of Stirling, Ayrshire College, University of St Andrews and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Citation:

Hill, V., Lovatt, M., Balabayev, A., Graham, C.W., Rossignoli, C., Ranieri, A., Thomas, A. and Marvis, C. (2026) *A summary analysis of relevant literature, research and scholarship on inclusive student assessment*. Quality Assurance Agency, September 2026



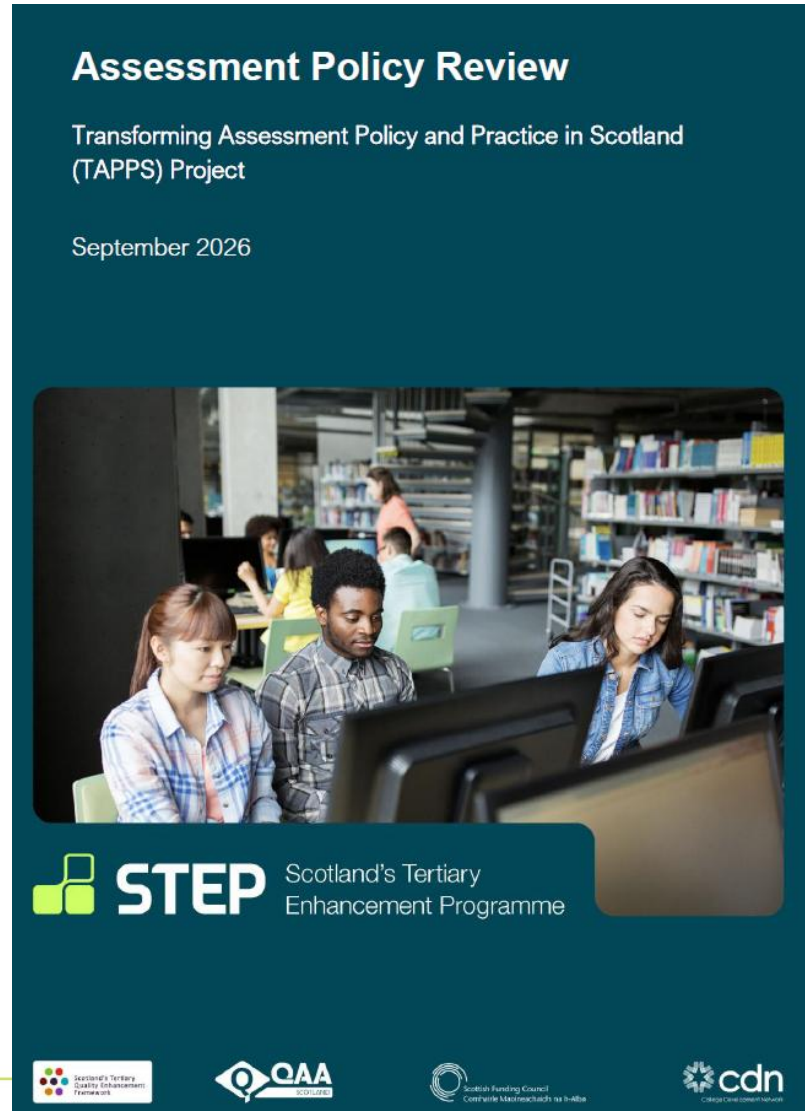
Literature Review:

Provides an analysis of assessment related literature covering flexibility, choice, optionality, inclusion and Universal Design for Learning in tertiary education.

*“Ultimately, the literature suggests that **meaningful change in assessment policy and practice requires a careful balancing of competing priorities:** between flexibility and comparability, innovation and assurance, agency and support, and inclusion and standards. Rather than viewing these as binaries to be resolved, they must be engaged with as **productive tensions** that require ongoing negotiation..”*



Project Activity and Impact: Year 1



Assessment Policy Review:

- The review analysed current assessment policies across all of Scotland's colleges and universities.
- Identifies a need for **policy change** across the sector to encourage further innovation, through:
 - Clearer **transparency and delineation between policy and guidance** in assessment policies – and more accessible policies (for staff and students).
 - A need for institutions and their **policies to be more anticipatory of student needs** and acknowledging the diversity of students and their needs relating to assessment

So what?

Why is the project important – why does it matter to us?

Purpose of today

To come together as a group of diverse voices representing the tertiary sector, including sector agencies and bodies, to consider how assessment policy influences practice, and how together we can shape the future direction of assessment policy in Scotland.

Our aim is use today to advance the conversation to start the transformation of policy to further enable innovation in assessment practice to support the tertiary sector deliver its strategic priorities related to learner attainment, progression and success.

Purpose of today

Discussion:

- Talk to the person next to you; ask them why they are here and what they are bringing to the day?

For example, knowledge of/interest in assessment, relevant role or experience related to assessment policy or reform.

Keynote

Dr Juuso Nieminen,
Senior Research Fellow,
CRADLE, Deakin University

**Rethinking inclusive
assessment beyond the
standard student**



Lunch & Networking



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TAPPS Assessment Policy Review

- Summary Literature Review used the following themes as lenses for our analysis:
 - Choice and Flexibility in Assessment
 - Optionality and Diversity in Assessment
 - Equity and Inclusion
 - UDL
 - Innovation
 - Skills Development
- Project members – staff and students – informed by the literature review, we reviewed the assessment policies of all 43 Scottish tertiary institutions, comprising 24 colleges and 19 universities.

TAPPS Assessment Policy Review

Findings:

- A need for institutions and their **policies to be more anticipatory of student needs and acknowledging, at a regulatory and policy level, the diversity of students and their likely needs** particularly in relation to assessment mode, format, and submission deadlines given the challenge (and competing priorities) of many learners within the contemporaneous context (e.g. work and caring commitments, commuting, mental health challenges).
- Identification and agreement of a **standard (potentially sector wide) grace period without penalty for late assessment submissions** to reduce administrative workload for staff and additional stress and burden for students.

TAPPS Assessment Policy Review

Findings:

- Include a clear (shared) definition of optionality particularly to support staff with assessments design responsibilities.
- Provide clarity on the extent to which optionality and flexibility can address the need for reasonable adjustments
- Devise a clear, sector-wide definition and standard for inclusive assessment design supported by examples and/or case studies from across the tertiary sector.
- UDL principles could be explicitly incorporated within policies to emphasise inclusive assessment practice through design.
- Further research is needed to satisfactorily resolve the potential tension between innovation in assessment and consistency and standardisation

TAPPS Assessment Policy Review

Summary of general sector-wide findings:

- Current fragmentation of policy documentation;
- Barriers in accessing policy documentation;
- Formality (and variation) of policy language potentially hindering clarity and accessibility (for staff, students and other stakeholders)
 - Opportunity to implement Language Accessibility Promise

Findings of the TAPPS Assessment Policy Review

Recommendations:

- There is a need for clearer transparency of and delineation between policy and guidance in assessment policies – and more accessible policies (for staff and students).
- Establish a shared language and clear naming conventions, definitions and descriptions of notions and practices related to assessment policy – e.g. regulations, policy, principles, procedures and guidance.

Findings of the TAPPS Assessment Policy Review

Recommendations:

- Ensure that pedagogical innovation is encouraged but remains inherently inclusive and equitable, balancing experimentation with clear risk management mechanisms to safeguard the learning experience of diverse learners.
- As part of the vision and implementation of TQEF, consider the efficacy and potential value of an agreed, co-created sector-wide set of principles of assessment or indeed an assessment policy to support enhancement of assessment practice across the Scottish tertiary sector.

Panel Discussion

What challenges does current assessment policy present in Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys?

Chair: Professor Susan Dawkes, Edinburgh Napier University, Vice-Principal Health and Dean of Sighthill Campus.

Panellists:

- Debra MacFarlane, Director of Regulatory Services, QAA;
- Professor Helen Scott, Deputy Principal (Education), University of Stirling;
- Dr Vic Boyd, Head of Learning & Teaching Academy, City of Glasgow College;

Providing perspectives from student representation:

- Annie Mason, Communities Co-ordinator and Local Co-ordinator, UHI/HISA;
- Katie Parker, Student Vice-President (Education), University of Stirling; and
- Euan Buchanan, Vice President of Learning and Teaching, City of Glasgow College

Panel Discussion

Can you each identify one assessment (or experience of assessment) either as a learner, educator or from your professional roles which you remember most deeply and share with us why this sticks out for you either positively or negatively?

Panel Discussion

What challenges do you see posed by assessment policy in providing inclusive assessment experiences and supporting diverse learner journeys across Scottish tertiary education?

Would you agree there is a need for change in policy to further support innovative and inclusive assessment practice?

Panel Discussion

How do you think we can influence change within policy across the tertiary sector and what do you think the benefits would be for learners (and educators)?

If we work together as a tertiary sector, what do we need to do to make this happen ?

Tea & Coffee

Discussion in Groups

Identifying ways forward:

What do you think are the strengths and limitations of current assessment policy in supporting learner diversity, success and skills development?

And what possible actions need to be taken to transform assessment policy in Scotland?

TAPPS On: Your action to takeaway

Name:

What one action (big or small) can you take to contribute to transforming assessment policy in Scotland?

My action to takeaway:

Thank you!

Keep in touch with us:
TAPPS@napier.ac.uk

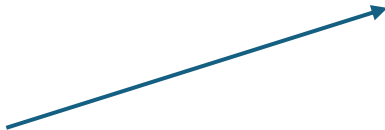


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