

What does it mean to put the student at the heart of assessment and feedback?

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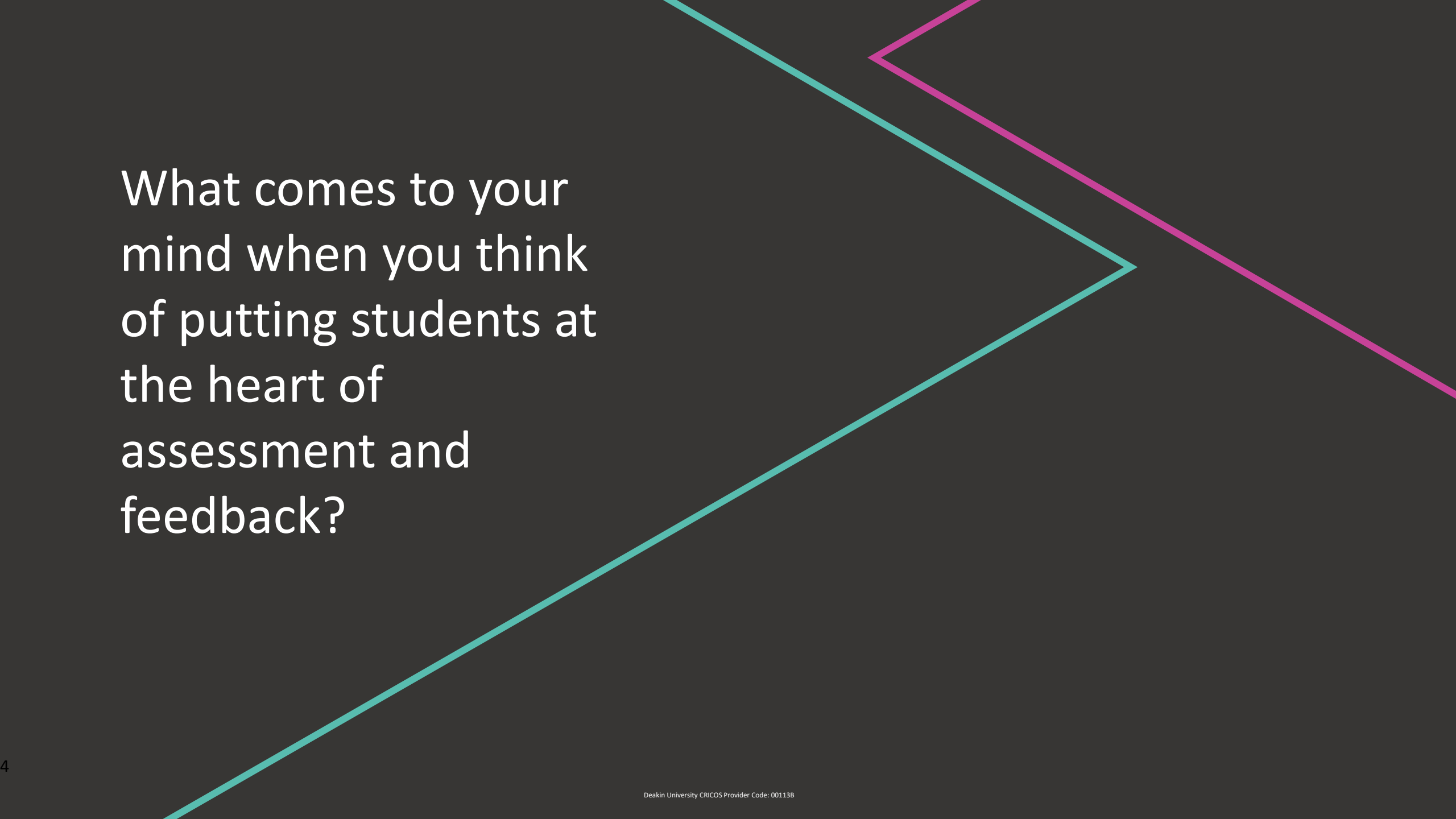
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What comes to your
mind when you think
of putting students at
the heart of
assessment and
feedback?

► Some things I should declare...

I am a pragmatist

I subscribe to the concept of assessment for learning

We are all human



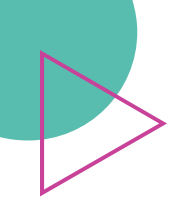
Placing students at the heart of assessment and feedback doesn't mean we neglect everything else!



Thinking metaphorically:

- The heart is important for perfusing the body
- The heart also relies on the body for nourishment
- ...and the body also exists within a broader environment

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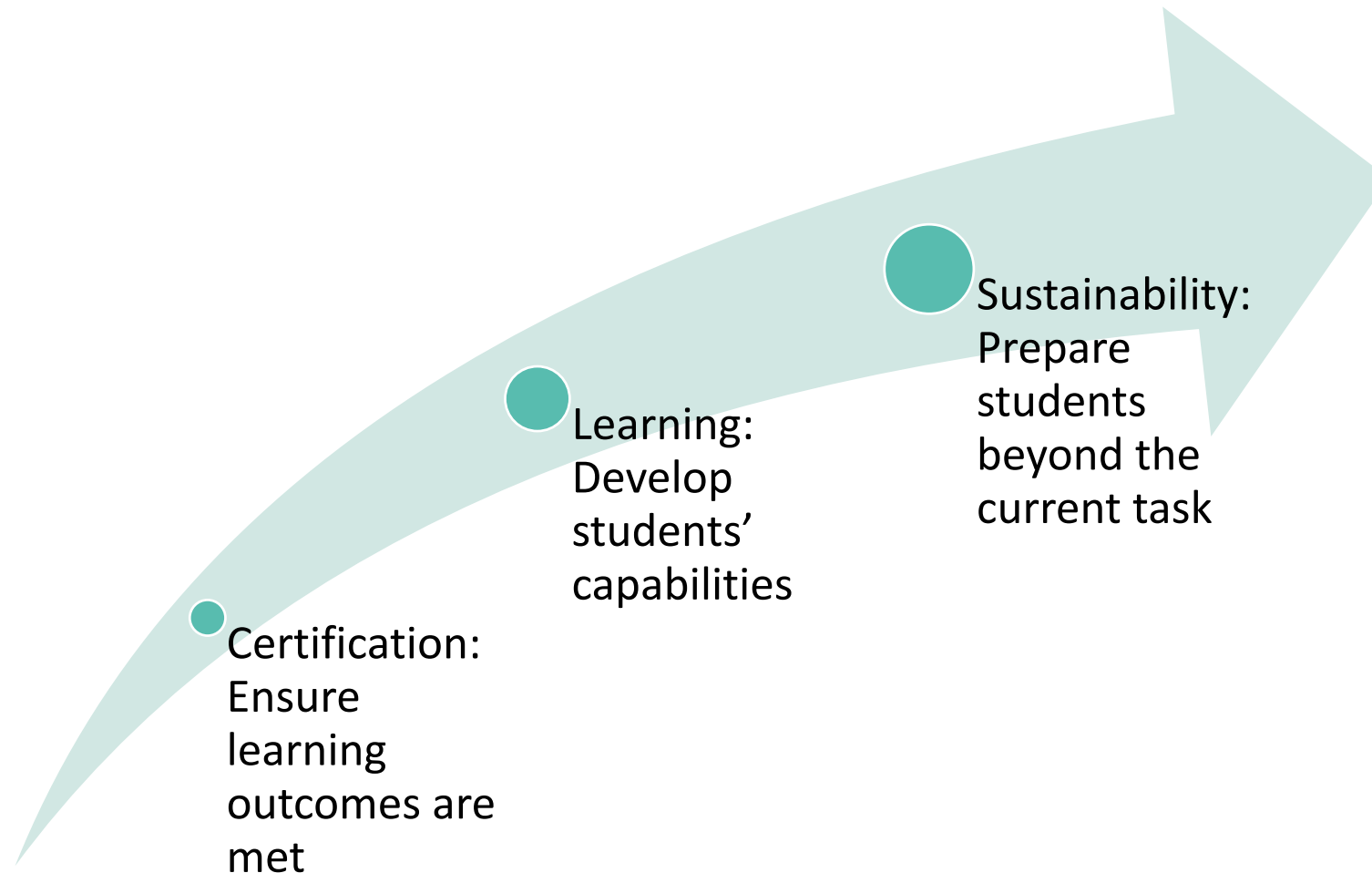
If we are putting students at the heart of assessment and feedback, then:

- Assessment and feedback are *learning* opportunities
- We need to understand and respond to student diversity
- Students should be involved in the design of assessment and feedback

► Assessment and feedback are learning opportunities



► Assessment serves multiple purposes



Boud & Soler 2016

“Students can, with difficulty, escape from the effects of poor teaching, they cannot (by definition, if they want to graduate) escape the effects of poor assessment.”

Boud 1995, p35

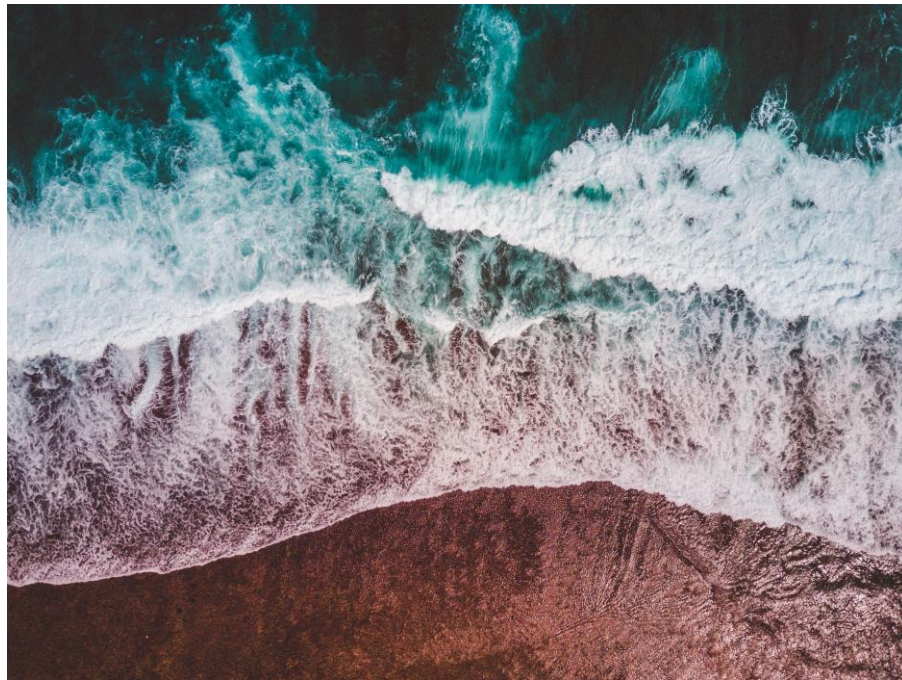


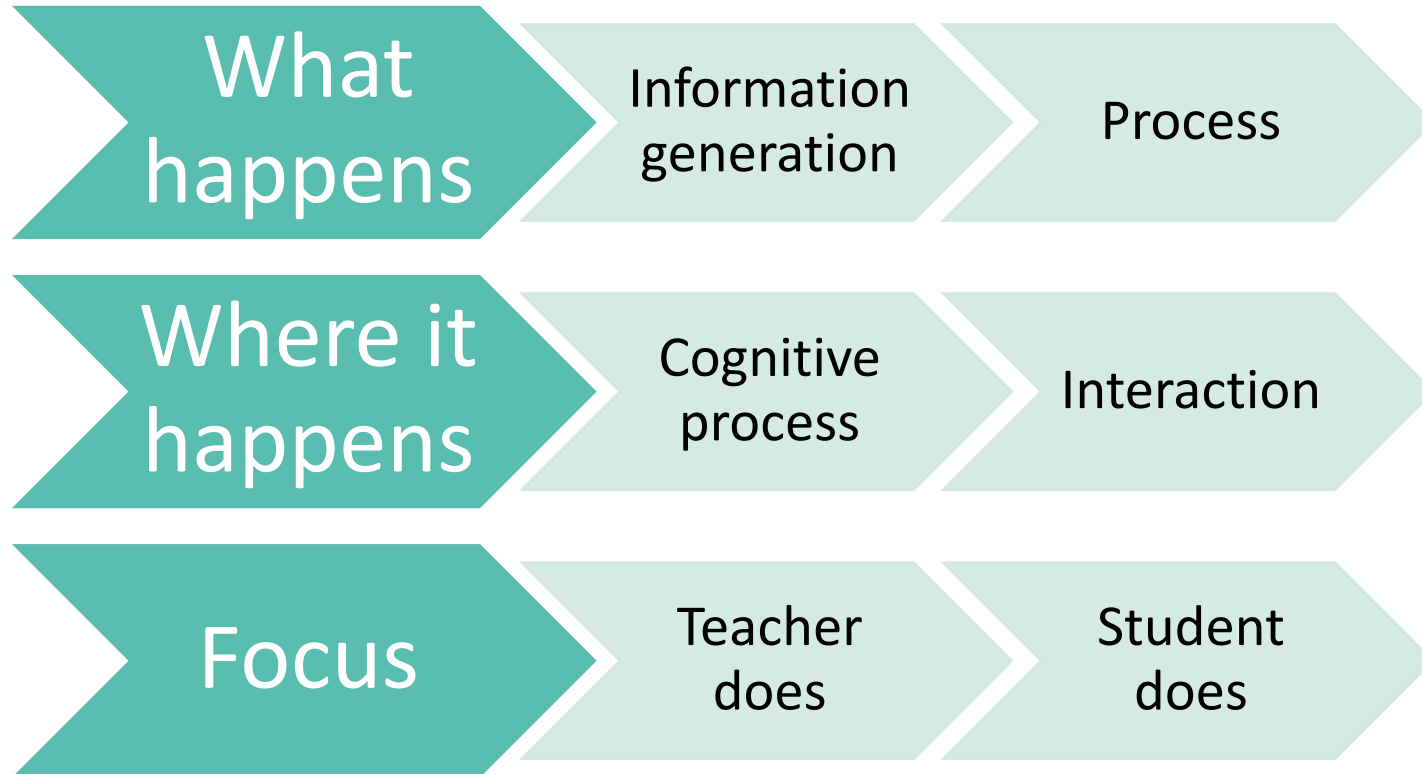
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Biggs 1999

Changing how we think about feedback



Boud & Molloy 2013

Feedback is: “a process in which learners make sense of information about their performance and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies.”

Henderson, M., Phillips, M., Ryan, T., Boud, D., Dawson, P., Molloy, E., & Mahoney, P. (2019)

**This is not
feedback**

“I left
feedback on
their final
essays, which
they never
collected”



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What might students
want to get out of
assessment and
feedback?

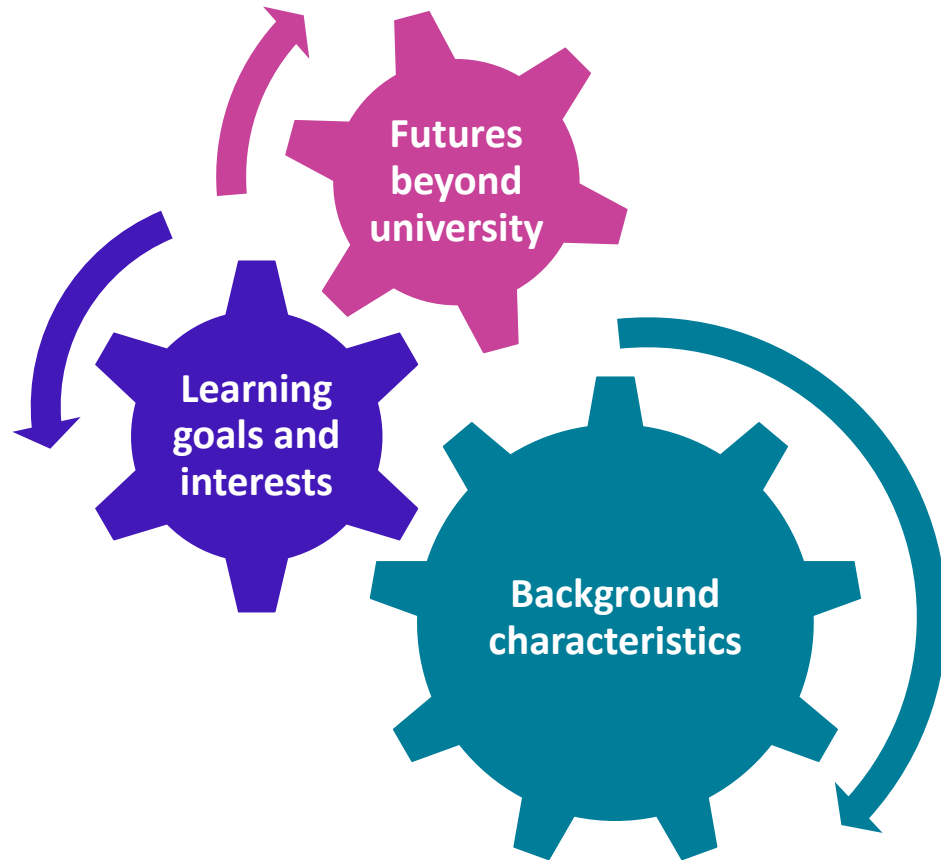
► **Students' response:** **What should teachers consider when designing or implementing assessment?**

“What are the different learning opportunities that can be gained through one assessment”

“Not just focusing on the mainstream, but also those at higher and lower levels, and from different backgrounds with different perspectives”

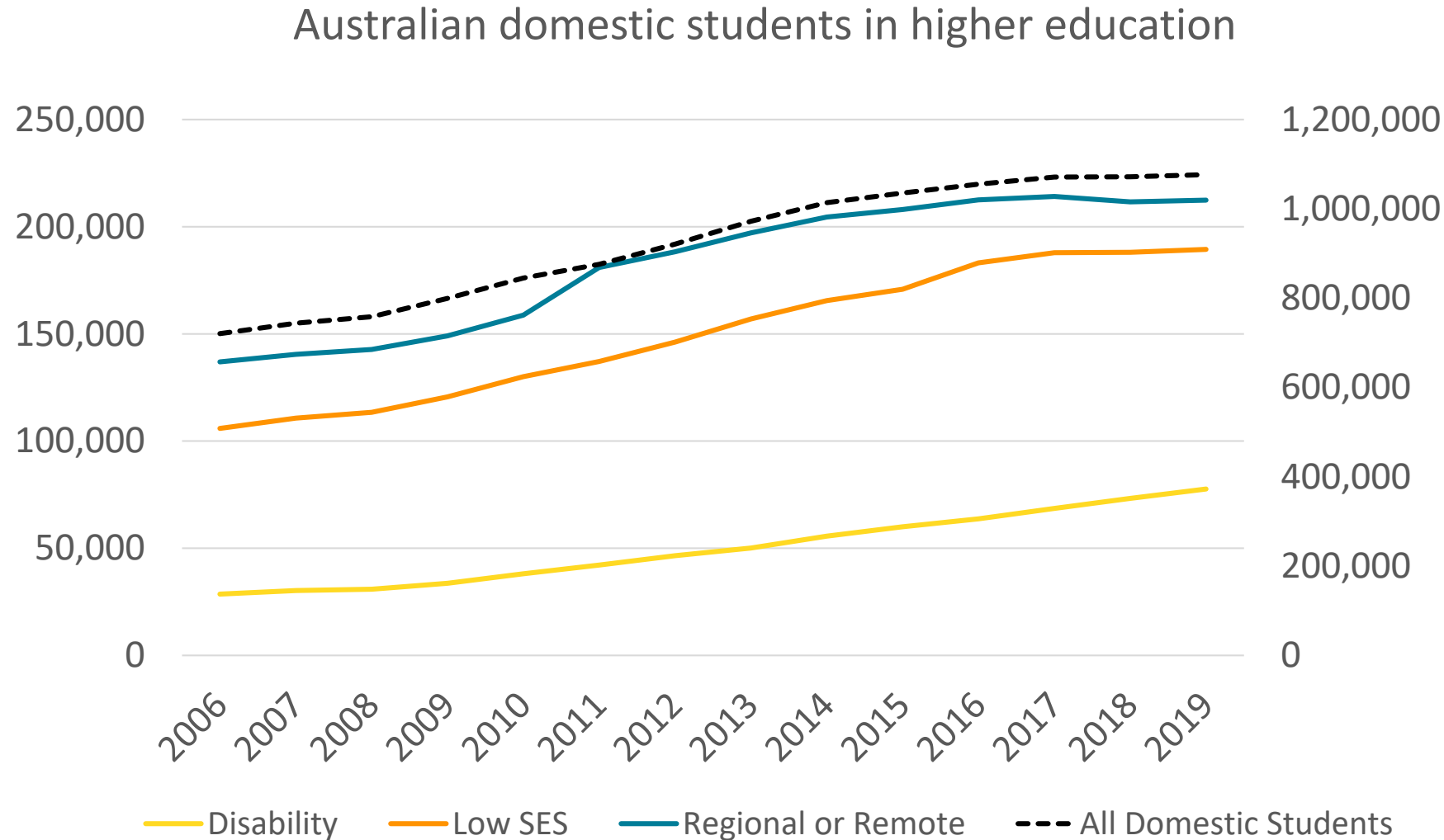
“Have them more applicable to our future careers e.g. allow more realistic assignments which are things we would be expected to do in our jobs”

► We need to understand student diversity



(Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill 2020, Willems 2010)

► Increasing enrolments of equity group students



Department of Education Skills and Employment (2020)

Diverse students' experiences of assessment

My units where I've been successful and I've received high distinctions, the difference was the unit chair and their empathy and flexibility and I think that made the most difference for me.

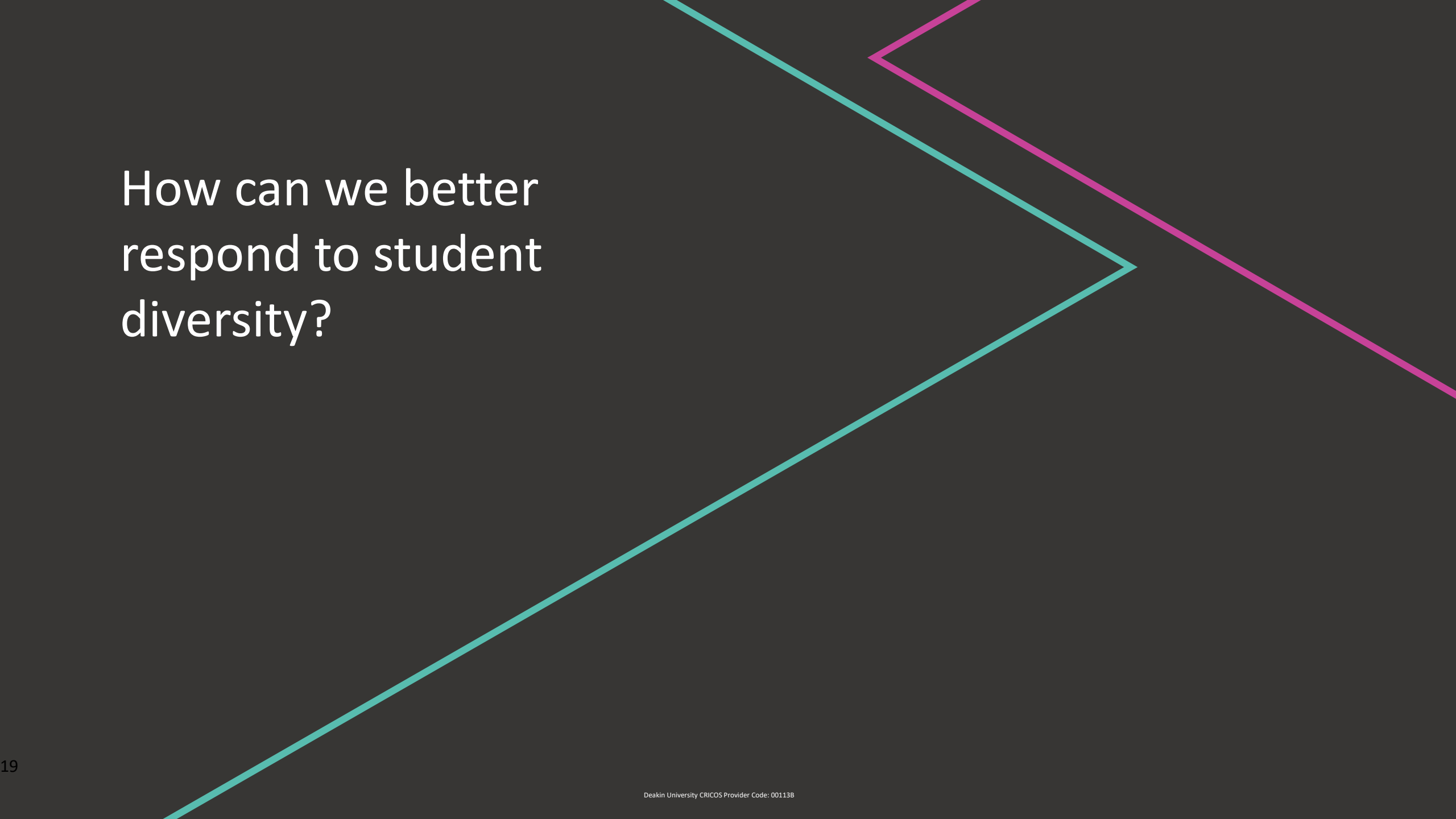
– Yasmin, science, FiF, mental health condition

Sometimes I guess I feel as though I'm an inconvenience, and it's difficult to talk to some lecturers depending on their personality.

– Courtney, health professions, RRR, physical condition and learning disability

I would have really struggled had I not been given extra time. [...] that really assisted me when I just needed a break or when I was just having trouble with understanding questions and having to read them again and again.

– Cassie, health professions, medical and mental health conditions

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How can we better
respond to student
diversity?

► Students' response: What should teachers consider when designing or implementing assessment?

“Be passionate in what they [academics] do and interested in having a real dialogue with the students”

“[avoid] Making the assignment too narrow- so students can't put any of their own views into it”

“relatable assignments that students can connect to”

► While we have a lot of power, we are not in control

Students can exercise agency in assessment and feedback
(Nieminen, Tai, Boud & Henderson 2021)

- Authorial agency: Students choosing subjects/units with particular types of assessment; taking on (or ignoring) aspects of feedback information
- Sociomaterial agency: co-creation of agency with others (human & non-human) e.g. peer feedback processes, the Learning Management System

► Partnerships: we can't do it alone



Team efforts

Particularly important given the significant power imbalance (Matthews, Tai, Enright, Carless, Rafferty & Winstone 2021)

Consider the ways that diverse students can be involved, beyond the “usual suspects” (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020)

Consider all stakeholders: industry accrediting bodies & external regulators

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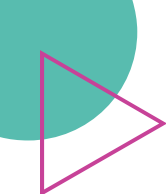
How might
partnerships work in
your context?

► What I've done recently...*

- Invited diverse students to share their assessment experiences
- Involved students alongside staff in participatory workshops to modify and improve assessment with a goal of inclusion
- Partnered with students to collaborate on a project on inclusive assessment, with the goal of developing resources for students and staff

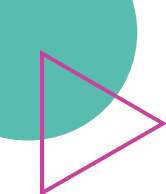
Recognised student contributions (I think) appropriately

* Not all these things are considered partnership depending on whose definition you choose to adopt

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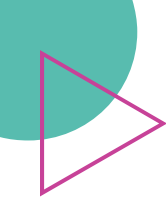
Three key messages (a recap) and questions for you

- Assessment and feedback are *learning* opportunities:
What might students want to get out of assessment & feedback?
- We need to understand student and respond to diversity: How can we do this better?
- Students should be involved in the design of assessment and feedback: How might partnership work in your context?

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So ... what does it mean to put the student at the heart of assessment and feedback?

- Focus on assessment for learning
- Support students' active role in feedback
- Realise that students are not all the same
- Recognise that students are in charge of their learning journey, within the constraints of systems and environments
- Involve students & stakeholders in assessment (and feedback) design



Questions?



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