

*Authentic to whom?  
Student experiences of  
authenticity of  
assessment*

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**DEAKIN**  
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# Acknowledgement of Country

As we gather for this meeting physically dispersed and virtually constructed, let us take a moment to reflect on the meaning of place and, in doing so, recognise the various traditional lands on which we do our business today.

I acknowledge the Elders – past, present and emerging – of the lands of the Eora nation, and their Ancestral Spirits, with gratitude and respect.



Authentic assessment

Research

An alternate perspective

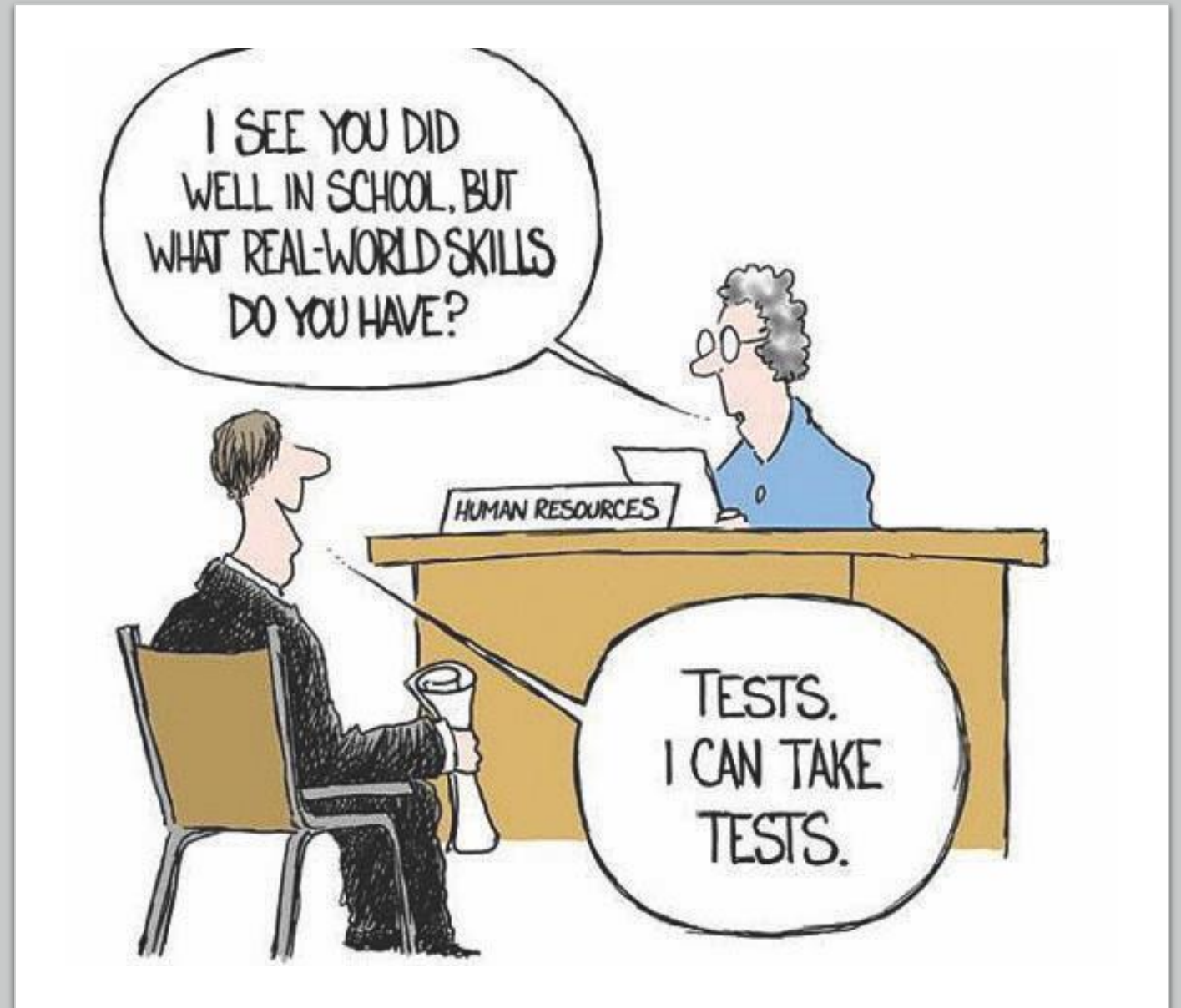
Practical suggestions for  
assessment design



# Why bother changing?

“Many students perceived traditional assessment tasks as arbitrary and irrelevant. This did not make for effective learning because they only aimed to learn for the purposes of the particular assessment, with no intention of maintaining the knowledge for the long-term.”

(Struyven, Dochy, and Janssens, 2003)





# The problem with assessment

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- Students don't see the point of what they are learning
- Assessment as an artificial exercise— jumping through hoops not meaningful to them
- Courses insufficiently aligned to the world of practice
- Assessments uninteresting to take and boring to mark

# Benefits of authentic assessment design

- impact on the quality and depth of learning achieved by the student
- development of higher-order cognitive skills
- improved autonomy
- commitment and motivation for learning
- self-regulation capacity
- metacognition and self-reflection

# Dimensions of authentic assessment

*Realism*: linked with everyday life and work

*Cognitive challenge*: prompts the development of higher order thinking

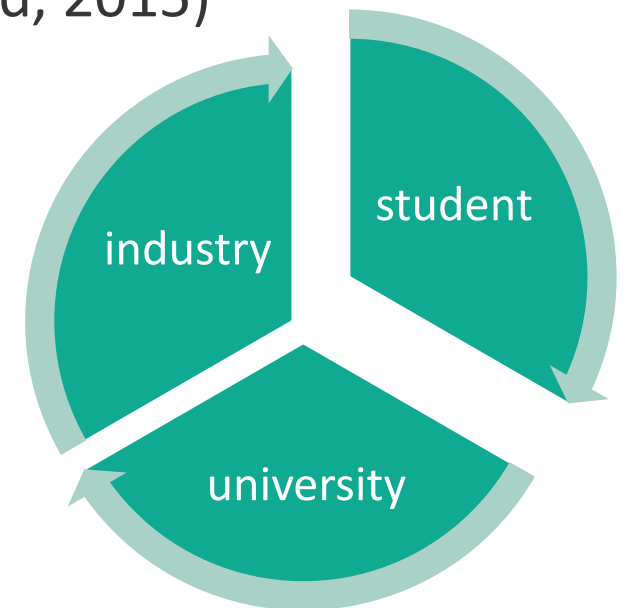
*Evaluative judgement*: come to know good quality and make judgements

(Villarroel et al., 2018)



Student perception of plausibility—do they accept it as real

Students' perceptions of alignment and authenticity of assessment are strongest contributor to the attainment of WIL generic outcomes influence their engagement and therefore learning from WIL (Smith & Worsfold, 2015)





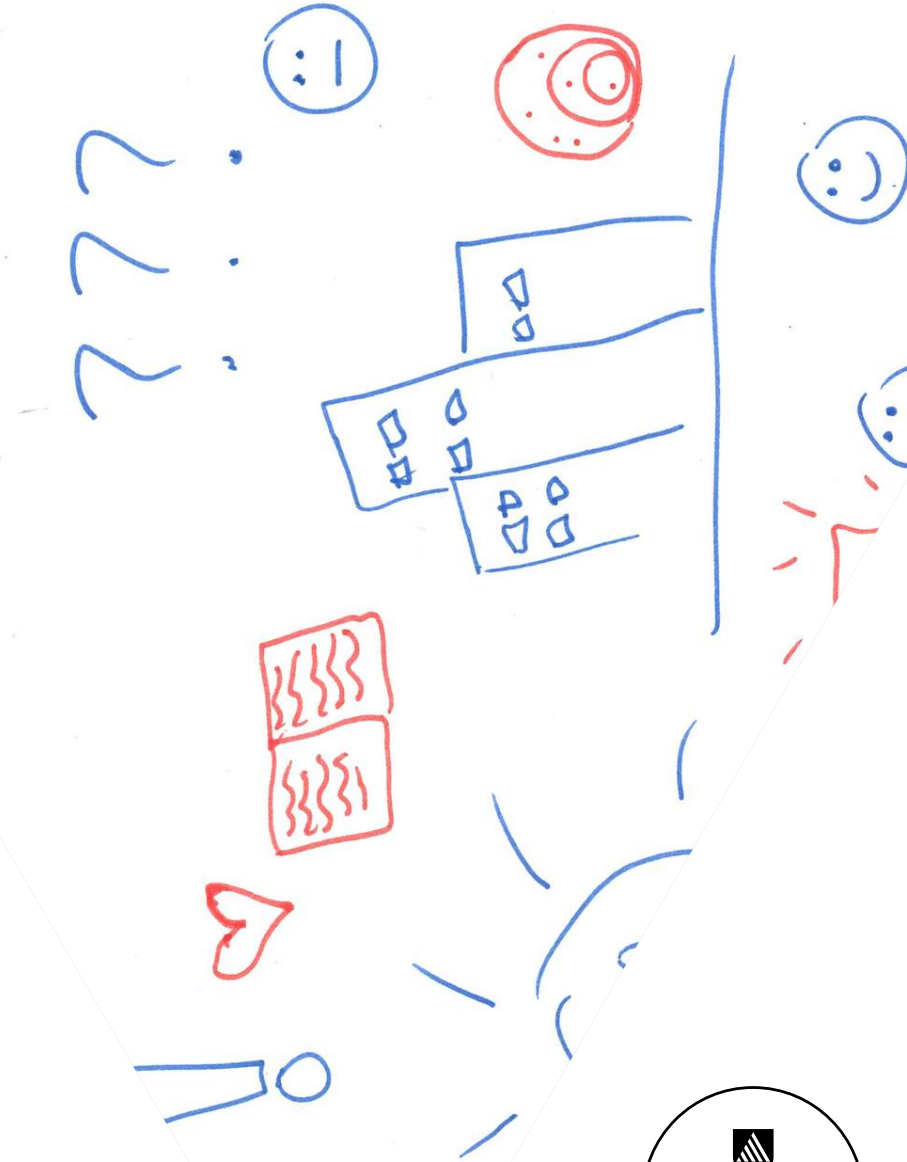
# Constructive alignment

Alignment = alignment between goals, activities and assessment

Something the 'learners have to create for themselves' (Biggs, 2003)

# Research question

*How do students experience alignment and authenticity between their WIL placement, their own expectations and how they are assessed?*



# Methods

Qualitative research

Two universities – 14 students

Tightly- or loosely-coupled placements

Drawings followed by semi-structured interviews  
(Brown and Wang 2013; Pitt 2017)

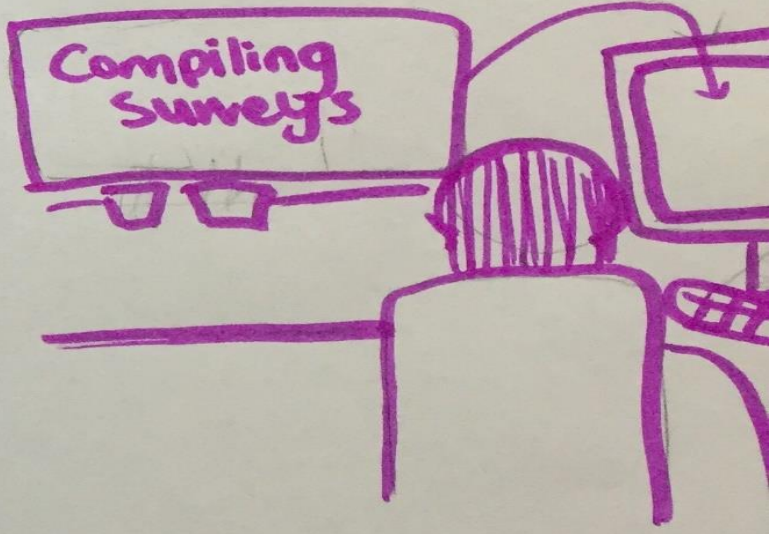
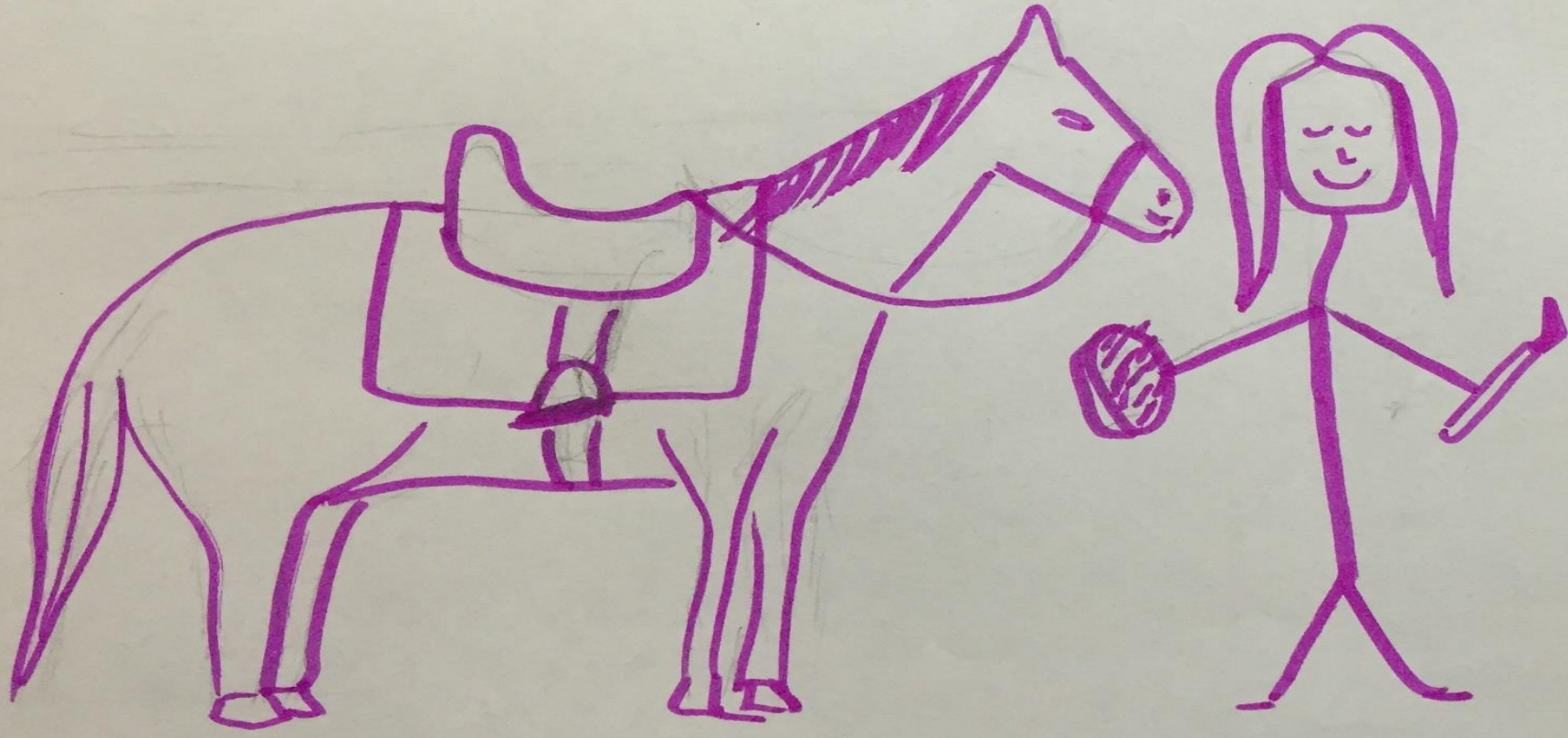
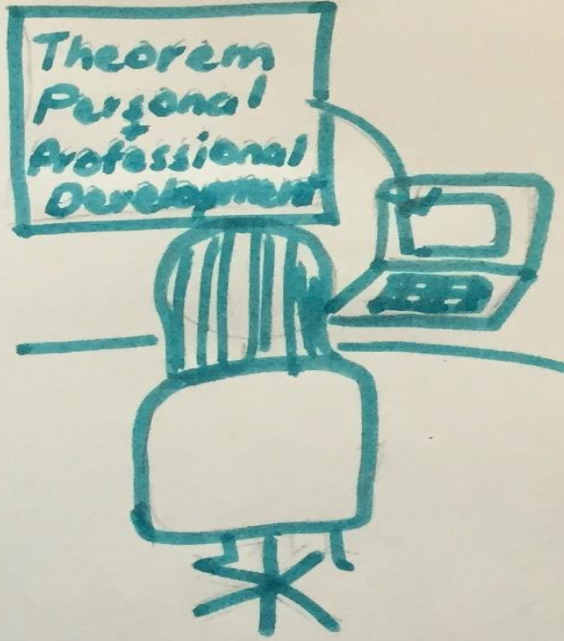
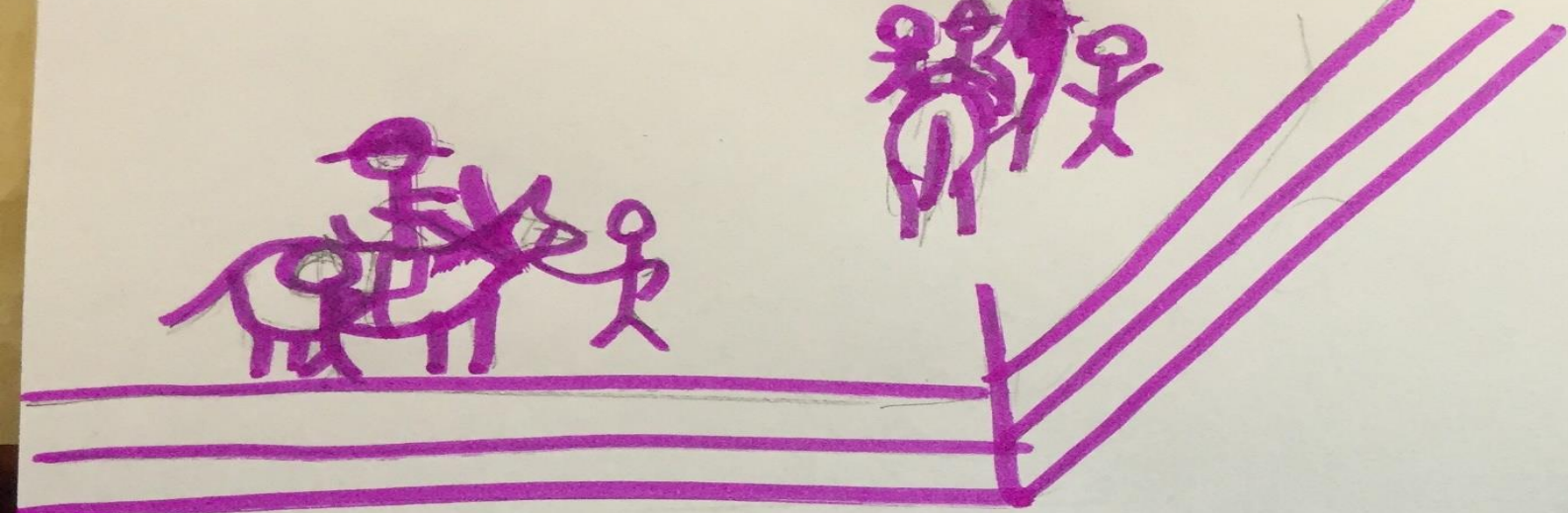
Document analysis

Thematic and case study analysis



# Three key (mis)alignments

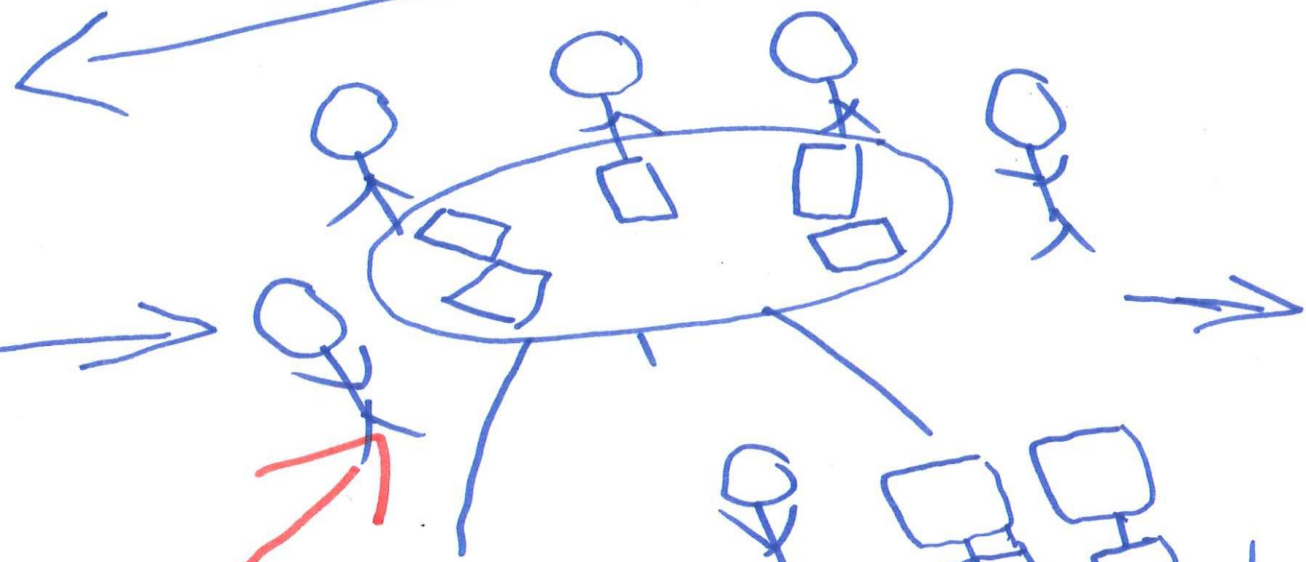
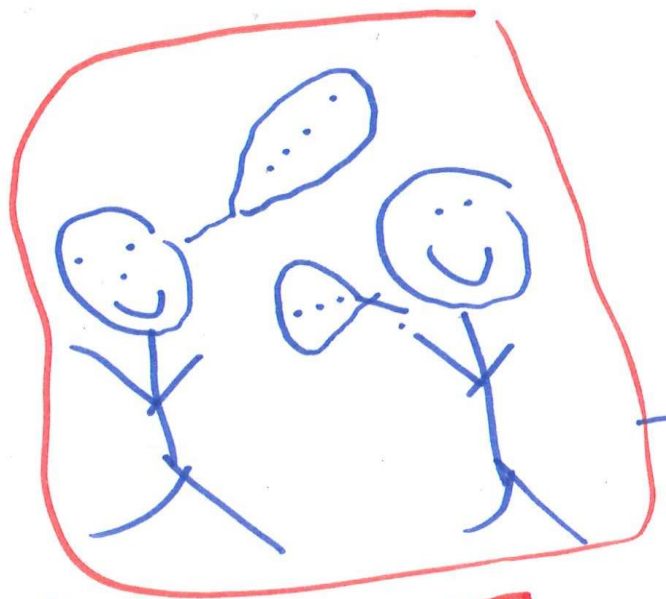
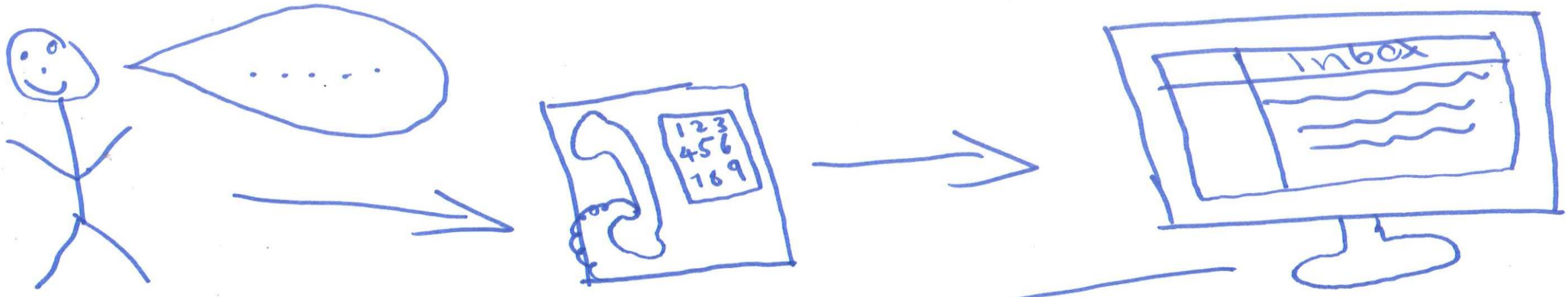
- 1) between assessment activities and future selves
- 2) between placement activities and assessment activities
- 3) between the university and industry roles and practices



# 1) Misalignment between assessment activities and future selves

- value of assessment was oriented to future selves
- assessment positioned them in student role

'I felt like they were just really more industry-based assessments, so they were really relevant, and it's actually stuff that we can go out and use ongoing, beyond our degree. The resume, even the journal document stuff, working with clients, they're actual ... industry-related skills.'

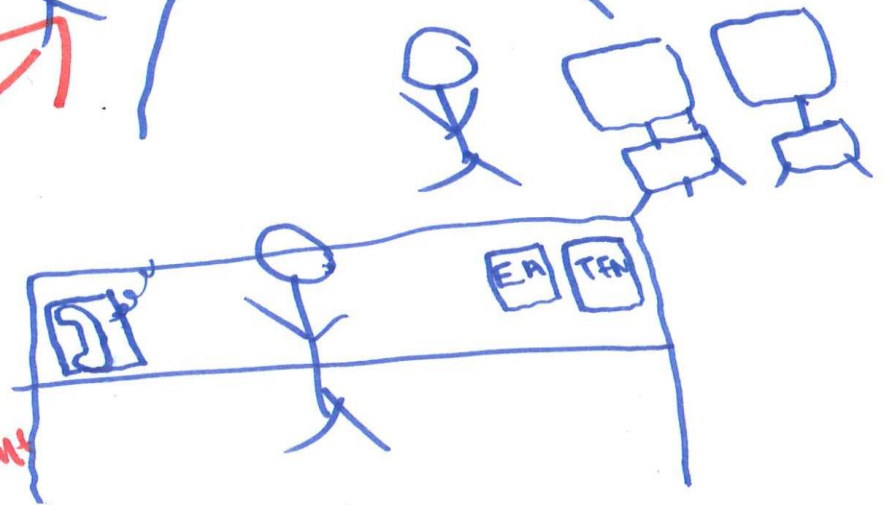


Name  
 Position  
 Length  
 Strengths  
 Weaknesses  
 Future jobs

**AT2**  
 Day 1  
 Day 2  
 Day 3

**Mid placement review**  
 - communication  
 - initiative

**AT3**  
 Future employment & learning from placement

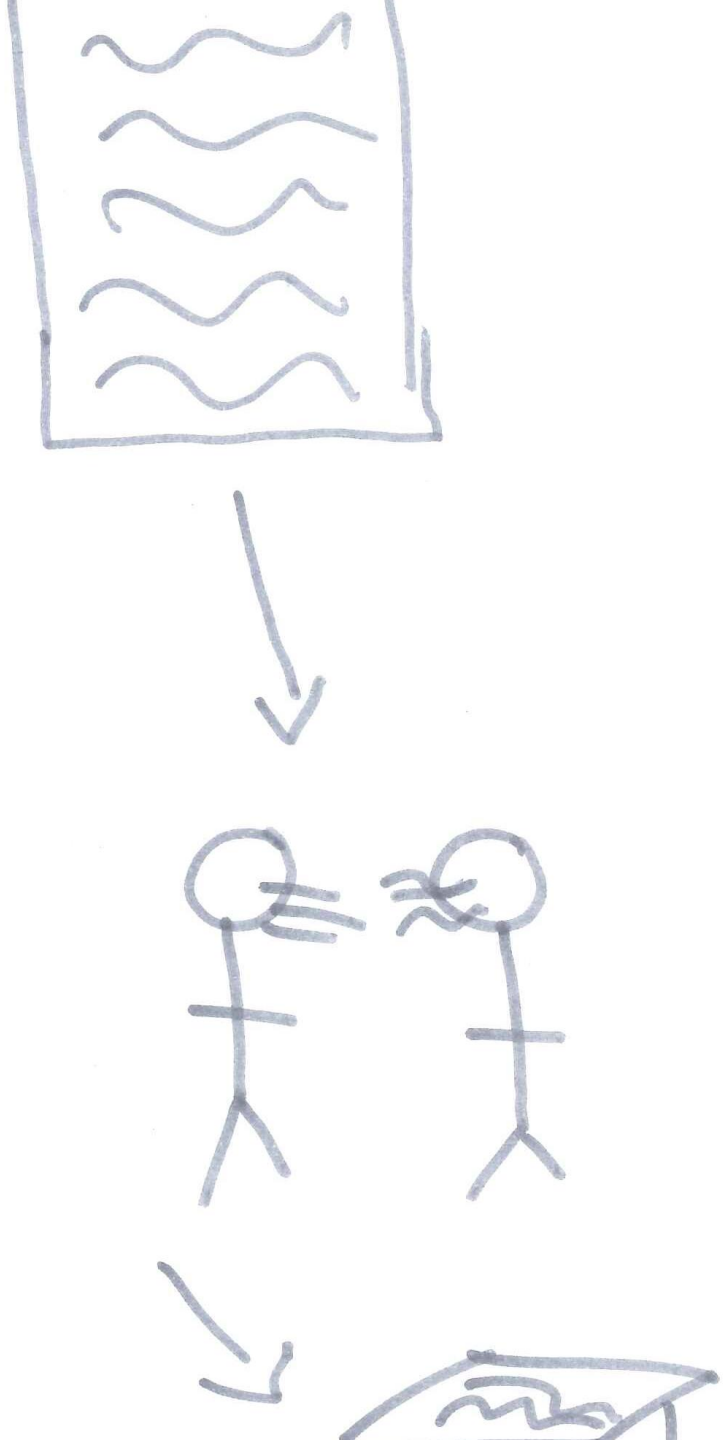
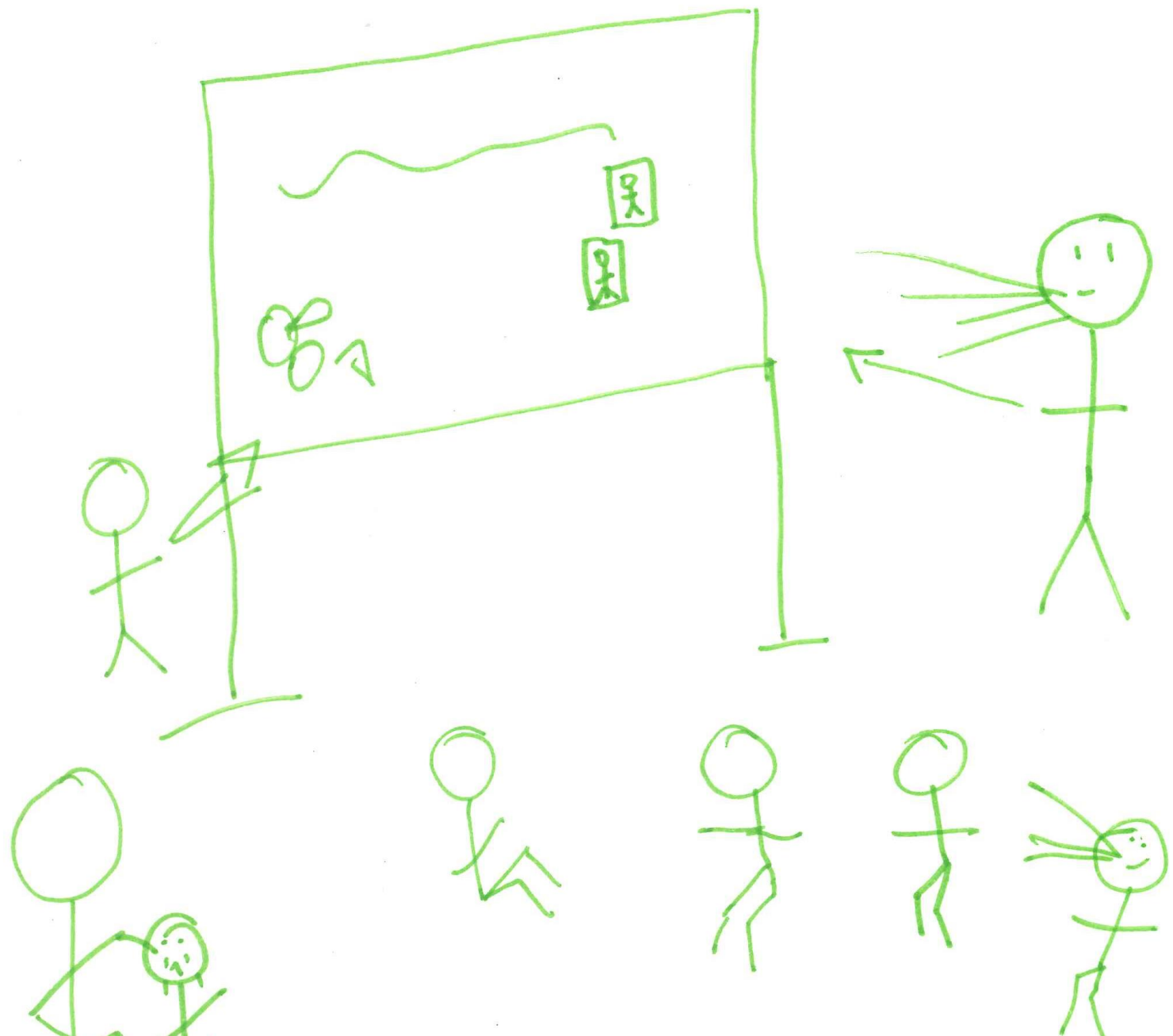


## 2) Misalignment between placement activities and assessment activities

- wide range of competencies learned but assessment tasks focused on a narrow genre of report writing or reflective writing
- leading to instrumentalism

‘The rubric for my assignment is very much focused on our understanding of the structure of a lesson plan and what needs to be in a lesson plan to teach an effective lesson rather than how we actually personally taught it and how we found the lesson plan either stayed the same or changed during the lesson’





### 3) Misalignment between the university and industry roles and practices

- mismatch between what they were taught at the university and how it was practised at the workplace
- learning regarding local enactments and variability of practice were not capitalised on
- assessment mostly university driven
- leading to cynicism

‘The way we're taught to document here at Uni, and then you go out into the work place, it's like, not necessarily the same at all. So that's frustrating when you're getting assessed at Uni and you've gotta tick these boxes, but it's like, that's not even the way they do it in real’

Assessment tools work as demarcations defining good practice and legitimate learning. These demarcations risk being disconnected from the everyday practice ... and hence risk decoupling the assessment tool and the participants' everyday practice ... leading to instrumentalism and ticking boxes (Elmholdt et al., 2016)



# What does this add?

Assessment depicted as individual and writing-driven, capturing narrow competencies

Students' constructive alignment contributes to authenticity of the assessment

Students want the assessment to reflect their achievements and developing identities

(Ajjawi et al., 2020)



# Reframing

Authentic assessment as boundary object – coordinating work between university and practice

Students as broker coordinating activity and meaning across the two communities, while constructing their professional identities for the communities they wish to join

Authentic assessment needs to create space for negotiation of meaning among stakeholders

(Ajjawi et al., 2020)



# Revised dimensions of authentic assessment

*Realism*: linked with everyday life and work

*Cognitive challenge*: prompts the development of higher order thinking

*Evaluative judgement*: come to know good quality and make judgements

(Villarroel et al., 2018)

*Constructive alignment*: check in on the misalignments



# Moving in an authentic direction

- Authentic assessment is not an absolute—it often remains a course task, not impinging on the world outside
- Two directions:
  - start from existing tasks and move towards authenticity, or
  - start with authentic examples in practice and see how they can be adapted to the constraints of a course without losing key features
  - ask students about their perspectives on what constitutes authentic

# Encouraging student constructions of alignment

Opening up opportunities for students in negotiating assessment tasks and fluidity in revising the learning plan/assessment tasks

Encourage students to reflect on the mis/alignments as opportunities for learning

Assessment that privileges their developing professional identities – how do we do this better?



# Conclusions

Not a destination – multiple dimensions and audiences

Needs to be designed in, and constructed/experienced by the student

Students are equipped for the future through the specific knowledge and skills they acquire AND their capacity to learn to make informed decisions about their own practice

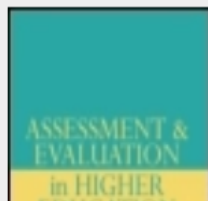




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David Boud, Rola Ajjawi, Joanna Tai  
Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University





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