

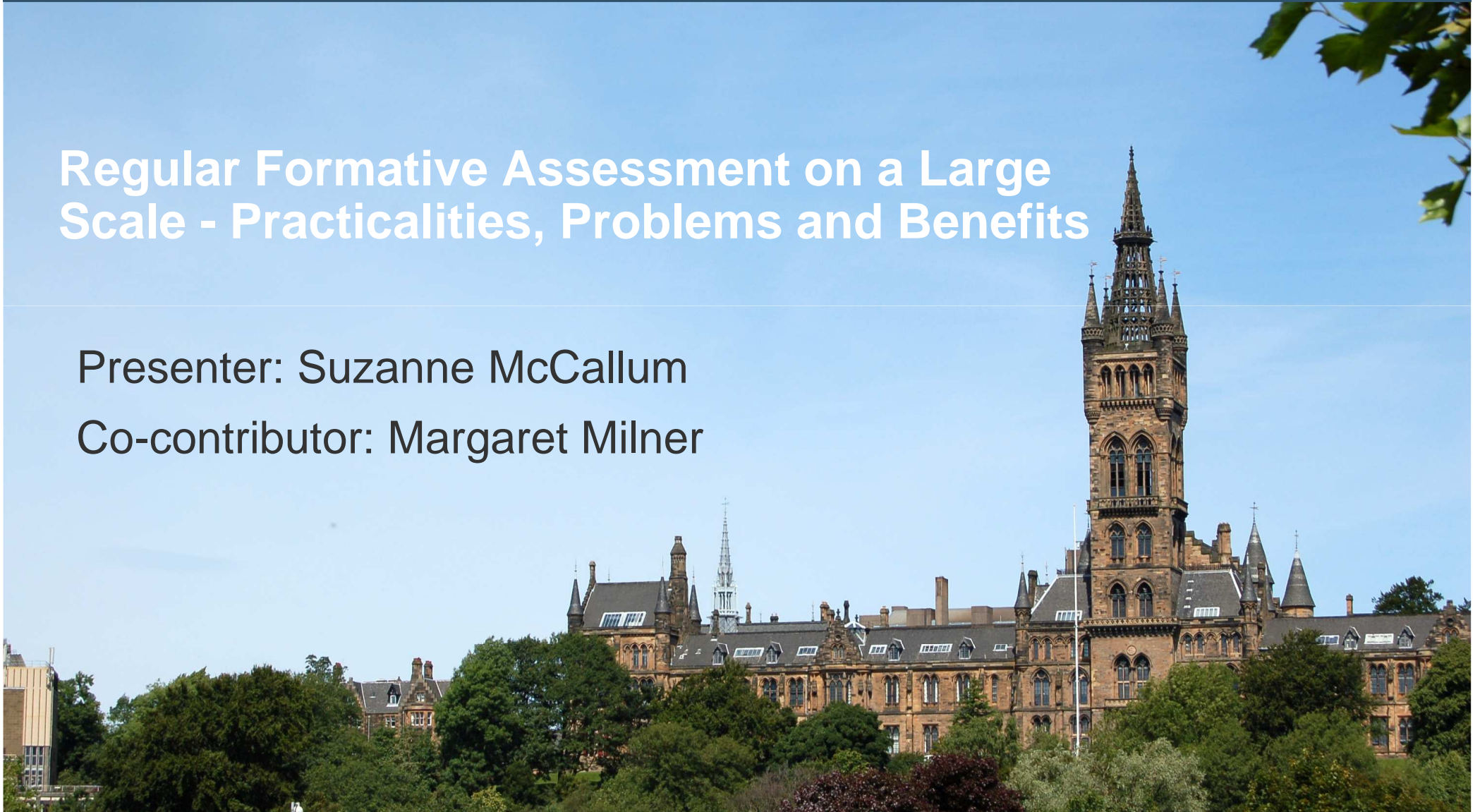


University
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Regular Formative Assessment on a Large Scale - Practicalities, Problems and Benefits

Presenter: Suzanne McCallum

Co-contributor: Margaret Milner





- Rationale for the project – why formative assessment is useful;
- Project design and consideration of best practice;
- Using Moodle – benefits and drawbacks;
- Evaluation after year 1;
- Changes made and their impact;
- Plans for the future.



Why formative assessment?

- Key drivers of the project / rationale:
 - National Student Survey (NSS) and general student feedback
 - Learning transitions – year 1 semester 1
 - Literature highlights that formative assessment in the early weeks of first year is associated with student success
 - e.g. Tinto, Yorke, Nicol
 - Encourage student self reflection and self assessment
- Setup of degree programme:
 - In year 1 semester 1 students undertake 3 courses:
 - Financial Accounting 1
 - Introduction to Business Statistics
 - Economics 1A



Project design/considerations:

- Feedback must be useful
 - QAA enhancement themes report, Nicol 2009, Principles of good feedback.
- Variety of questions (not just MCQs).
- Spread workloads and give regular feedback.
 - FA1 tests: weeks 2, 4, 7 & 11
 - IBS tests: weeks 5 & 9
 - Weeks 8 and 10 – assignments due.
- Build student confidence and encourage regular study.
- Early check on problems
 - Retention and December exams
- **All quizzes compulsory** – otherwise students may choose not to engage with this activity
- **Main limitation** – staff student ratio.
- **Chosen method** – e-assessment quizzes using Moodle.



- **Benefits:**
 - Range of question types available;
 - Time limits can be set;
 - All students enrolled on the course can access the system;
 - Questions match course e.g. notation, terminology etc;
 - No additional monetary cost;
 - Immediate feedback for students AND staff.
- **Drawbacks:**
 - Time needed to write questions AND feedback.
 - Providing feedback is very time consuming, but key to the success of the project.
 - Not the easiest and most intuitive system to use.
 - ATTEND A TRAINING COURSE.
 - **Moodle's treatment of numerical answers! Largest, unanticipated problem of the whole project.**



- **Suggestions:**
 - Spend some time in class explaining the purpose of the quizzes to students;
 - Provide a guide and a practice test;
 - Remind students when the tests are approaching;
 - Explain the difference between:
 - Submit
 - Save without submitting
 - Submit all and finish



- Method:
 - Additional questions in end of semester questionnaire.
- Main findings:
 - Positives:
 - The majority of students thought the quizzes:
 - Helped them understand the course and to learn more;
 - Encouraged regular study;
 - Helped them assess their progress with the course.
 - For staff:
 - Instant feedback on how the class as a whole and individual students are progressing;
 - Allowed identification of difficult topics and intervention could be taken in a timely manner.
 - Negatives:
 - Students:
 - No clear view that the quizzes helped with the transition into higher education;
 - Main complaint was with correct answers being marked wrong, due to problems with Moodle recognising numbers.
 - Staff:
 - Time spent trying to chase students who had not completed quizzes on time;
 - Dealing with emails from students who were upset that their correct answer had not been identified by the system.



- Changes made:
 - Instructions on entering numerical answers provided and repeated for each question of this type;
 - One large FA1 quiz split into 2 smaller quizzes;
 - Administrative assistance obtained to “chase up” students who do not complete quizzes;
 - Some formatting changes e.g. show all questions on one page & ensure both courses use a consistent format;
 - Consistent dates (are weekends included or not);
 - Reopen quizzes at the end of the course for revision purposes.
- Impact of changes:
 - Very few student complaints, whole process ran very smoothly;
 - Outcomes very similar (students still didn't identify the quizzes as helping them make a transition into higher education).



Future plans:

- Continue to use Moodle quizzes to provide regular formative assessment on FA1;
- Consider the implications of IBS being removed from the timetable in future;
- Consider the appropriateness of expanding this method into other courses.

- Any comments or questions?