



Centre for Research in
Assessment and Digital Learning

CRADLE PhD Scholarship 2025 topics

As part of the application process, prospective students must develop an original research. Below is an overview of current CRADLE areas of focus, potential supervisors, and recent CRADLE publication(s) on those topics to illustrate our typical interests. We would expect a prospective candidate to develop their proposal taking one of these topics as a starting point, then share it with prospective supervisors prior to the application submission.

Effective feedback for learning – including feedback literacy

Potential supervisors: David Boud, Phillip Dawson, Juuso Nieminen

Feedback can have a positive impact on learning, but what makes for effective feedback? Beyond participating in well-designed feedback processes, students may need to develop particular strategies in how they approach feedback so that it has an impact on their learning, now and into the future. A project could focus on feedback literacy interventions, or feedback designs, including digitally mediated feedback and peer feedback.

- Dawson, P., Yan, Z., Lipnevich, A., Tai, J., Boud, D., & Mahoney, P. (2024). Measuring what learners do in feedback: the feedback literacy behaviour scale. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 49(3), 348-362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2240983>

The implications of generative Artificial Intelligence for assessment and feedback in higher education

Potential supervisors: Phillip Dawson, Margaret Bearman

Generative artificial intelligence has disrupted previous ways of thinking about the purposes and designs of assessment and feedback in higher education. There is a need for the close study of what educators and students do in response to this. Students interested in this project could consider joining a larger team investigating how genAI interacts with assessment, and could take a focus on educators or students.

- Lodge, J., Bearman, M., Dawson, P., Howard, S. (2023). Assessment reform for an age of artificial intelligence. TEQSA. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/corporate-publications/assessment-reform-age-artificial-intelligence>

Academic integrity and assessment security in online assessment

Potential supervisors: Phillip Dawson

As assessment has rapidly shifted online, and artificial intelligence has increased in its capabilities, many educators have expressed concerns about cheating. A range of assessment designs and technologies have been deployed in

response. This project involves an investigation of the effectiveness of those approaches at addressing cheating (if it really is cheating), as well as their potential harms and benefits.

- Dawson, P., Nicola-Richmond, K., & Partridge, H. (2024). Beyond open book versus closed book: a taxonomy of restrictions in online examinations, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 49(2), 262-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2209298>

Developing evaluative judgement

Potential supervisors: David Boud, Margaret Bearman

The capability to judge the quality of work of self and others is an important part of becoming a capable professional practitioner and should be intentionally developed during university studies rather than being left up to chance. How can learners be better supported to develop the ability to make judgements about their own learning? How can it be fostered in different contexts? How does it develop over time? This project might take a particular disciplinary or contextual focus to address these questions.

- Tai, J., Ajjawi, R., Boud, D., Dawson, P., & Panadero, E. (2018). Developing evaluative judgement: enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work. *Higher Education* 76, 467–481. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0220-3>
- Fischer, J., Bearman, M., Boud, D., & Tai, J. (2024). How does assessment drive learning? A focus on students' development of evaluative judgement, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 49(2), 233-245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2206986>

The role of the social world in feedback and assessment (e.g. culture, relationships, emotions, and power)

Potential supervisors: Margaret Bearman, Juuso Nieminen

Beyond the cognitive, there are significant emotional, social and material influences on the way that feedback and assessment unfolds in the world, and shapes who learners might become. How might this change what learners, teachers or institutions do? This project offers the opportunity to research assessment or feedback as a cultural, social or sociomaterial practice.

- Bearman, M., Ajjawi, R., Castanelli, D., et al. (2023). Meaning making about performance: A comparison of two specialty feedback cultures. *Medical Education* 57(11), 1010–1019. <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.15118>

New knowledge practices in a time of artificial intelligence

Potential supervisor: Margaret Bearman

Workplaces are increasingly mediated by big data, analytics and artificial intelligence. This has implications for universities and for learning-on-the-job. How do we navigate a world with new kinds of knowledge practices? This project could investigate learning practices across the continuum of higher and professional education.

- Bearman, M., Ajjawi, R. (2023). Learning to work with the black box: Pedagogy for a world with artificial intelligence. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 54, 1160–1173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13337>

Diversity and inclusion in assessment and feedback design and practice

Potential supervisors: Margaret Bearman, Juuso Nieminen

Students with diverse backgrounds and capabilities are choosing to enrol at university. While participation rates are improving, success and retention lag behind. Assessment and feedback are implicated as key practices that influence whether student success, but how do these significant parts of university study contribute to their inclusion? This project could explore diverse student experiences relating to assessment and feedback, and/or the affordances and limitations of current and emerging assessment designs.

- Tai, J., Mahoney, P., Ajjawi, R., Bearman, M., Dargusch, J., Dracup, M., & Harris, L. (2023). How are examinations inclusive for students with disabilities in higher education? A sociomaterial analysis. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48(3), 390–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2077910>

The longer-term effects of assessment and feedback: student identities, being and becoming

Potential supervisor: Juuso Nieminen

Assessment and feedback are commonly portrayed as influential factors for student learning, but they also have longer-term effects beyond immediate learning outcomes. Assessment also influences students' developing professional identities over time. How could we better understand how student identities are influenced by assessment? How could we design assessment that better considers the long-term processes of professional identity development? This project could explore these questions empirically, particularly through longitudinal approaches.

- Nieminen, J. H. (2024). How does assessment shape student identities? An integrative review. *Studies in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2334844>

Alternative representations of achievement

Potential supervisors: Juuso Nieminen, David Boud

The use of traditional course/unit grades in higher education has been criticised in scholarly work at least for a century. Grades have been claimed to drive student learning; they have been called inaccurate and ineffective; and they have been connected to neoliberal and performative values. More recently, there has been criticism that they don't portray the achievement of learning outcomes and that they are inappropriately aggregated into Grade Point Averages. So far, the criticism of grading has not led to change in the representation of student achievement on a wide scale. This project could consider the empirical effects of alternative forms of reporting outcomes of learning, or new theoretical approaches for thinking about portrayal of performance.

- Ajjawi, R., & Boud, D. (2023). Changing representations of student achievement: The need for innovation. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61(3), 597–607. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2192513>