

***“[The] pupils got it all by heart; and, when Examination-time came, they wrote it down; and the Examiner said ‘Beautiful! What depth!’***

***They became teachers in their turn, and they said all these things over again; and their pupils wrote it down, and the examiner accepted it; and nobody had the ghost of an idea what it meant”***

**Lewis Carroll, 1893**



# Assessment and Feedback

**Edmund Cannon**

(University of Bristol)

**Christian Spielmann**

(University College London)

[www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk](http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk)



# Question

What do you think are the objectives of **assessment** and **feedback** ?



# ASSESSMENT

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## The Learner: Classical Distinction

- Measure the extent to which students understand the material/achieve the intended learning outcomes
  - ‘Assessment of learning’
- Supports students’ learning
  - ‘Assessment for learning’

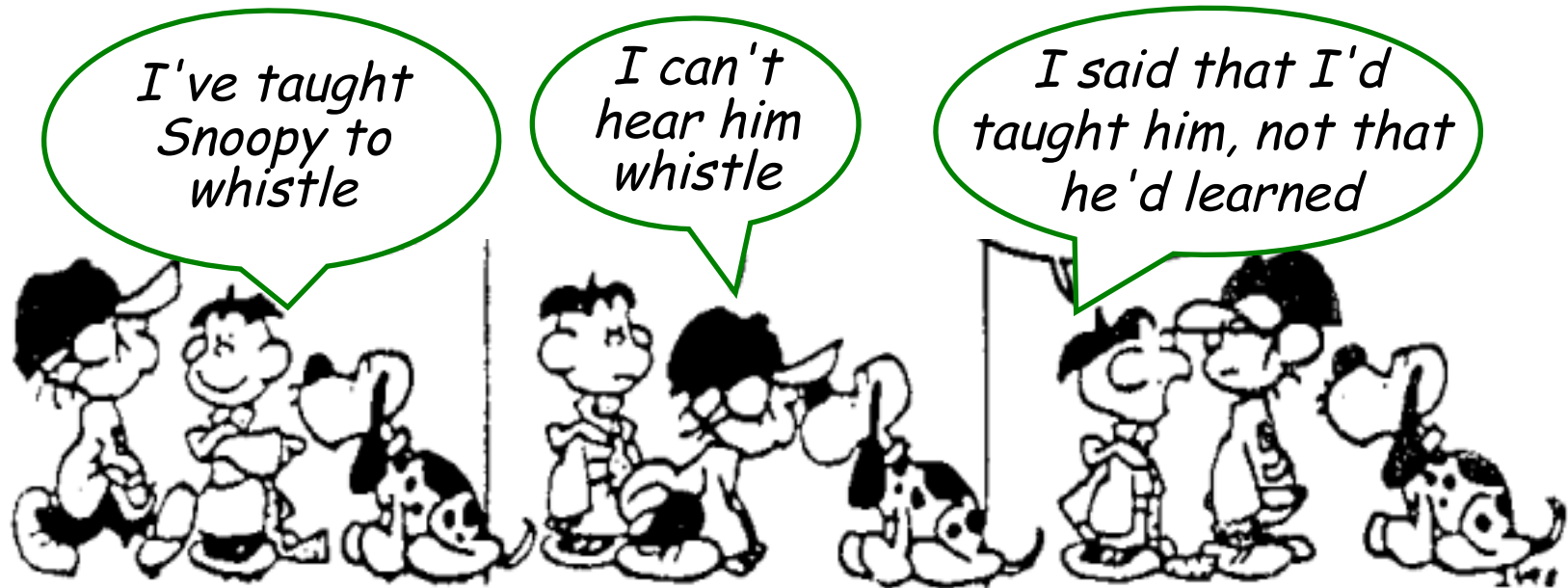
**summative assessment**

**formative  
assessment**

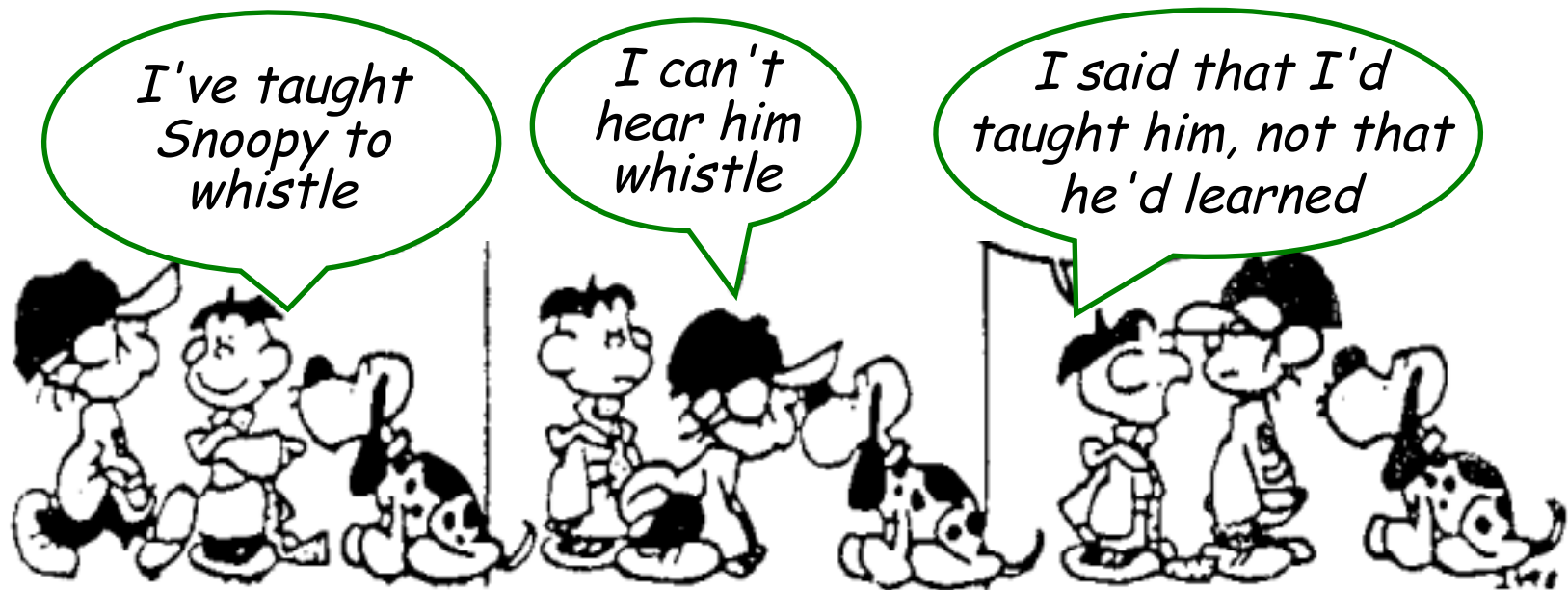
# What do you think?



# Objectives of A&F:



## The Educator: Feedback function



- Provides evidence on the effectiveness of teaching/learning activities
- Identifies students who are struggling and need support

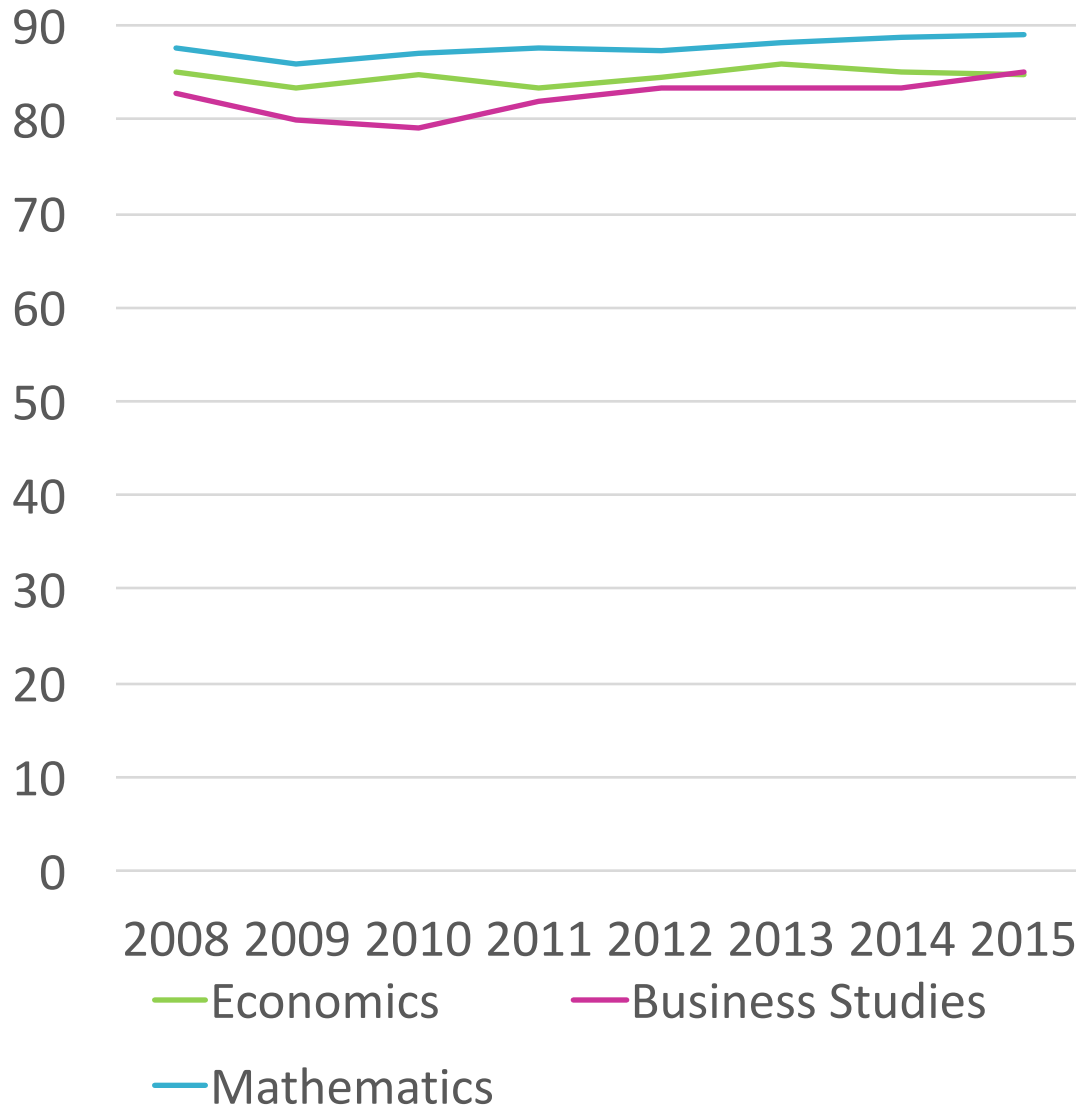


# Another reason...



→ COMPLETE THE SURVEY ←

% Positive Responses - Q22



Question 22:

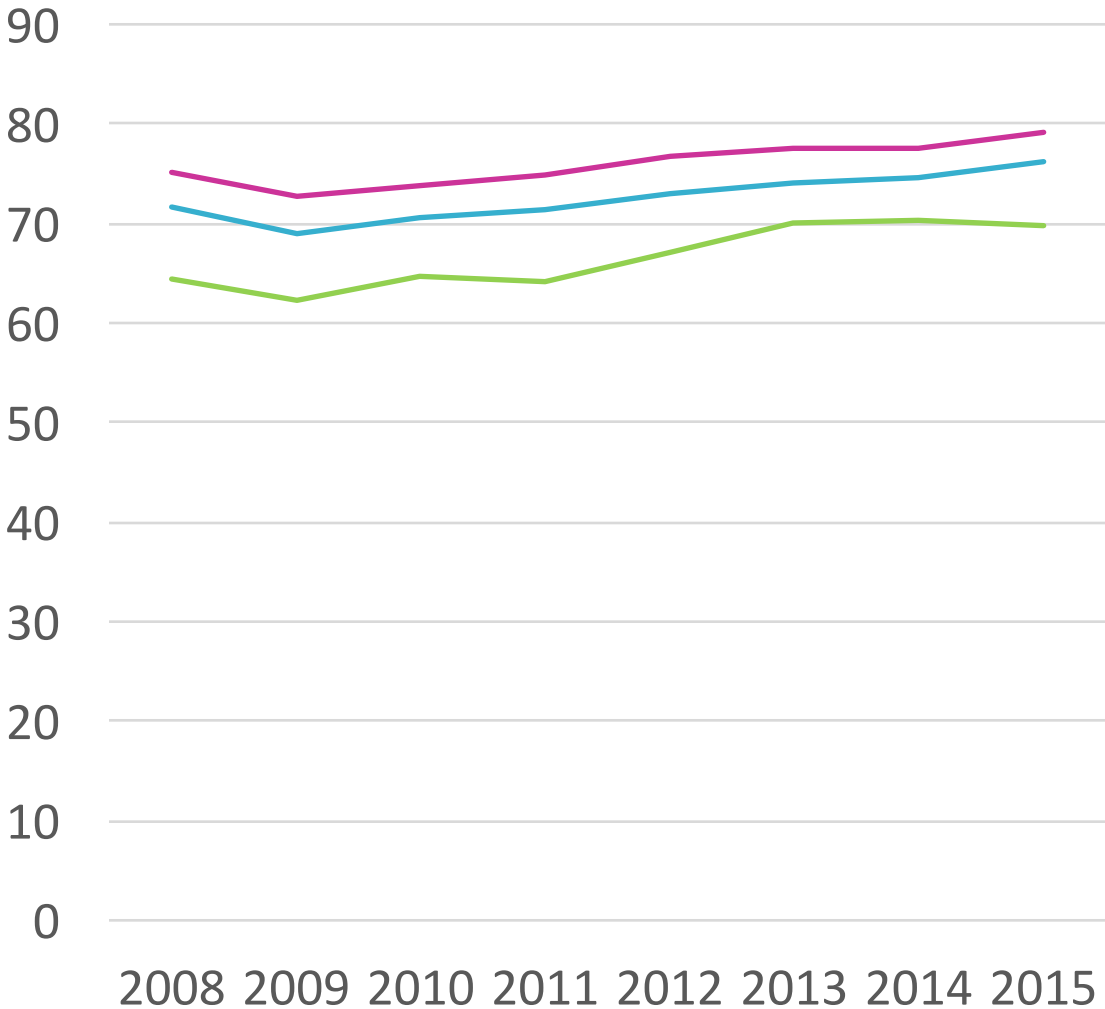
“Overall I’m  
satisfied  
with the quality  
of the  
course”

# NSS Questions on Assessment



5. “The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance”
6. “Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair”

# Q5 - % of positive responses



- Q05 - Economics
- Q05 - Business Studies
- Q05 - Mathematics

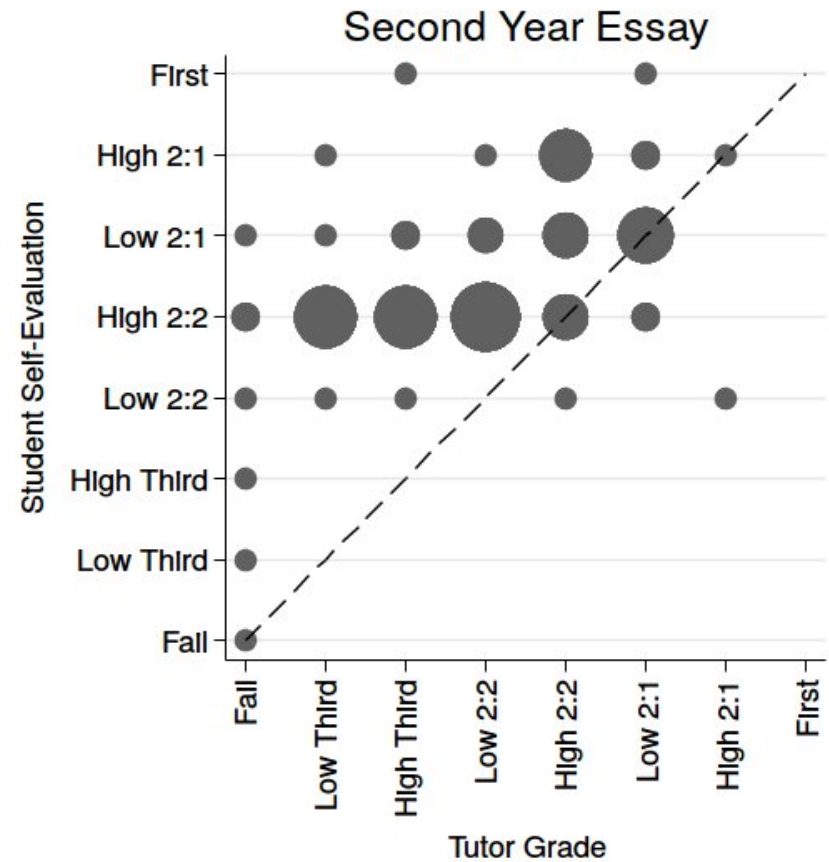
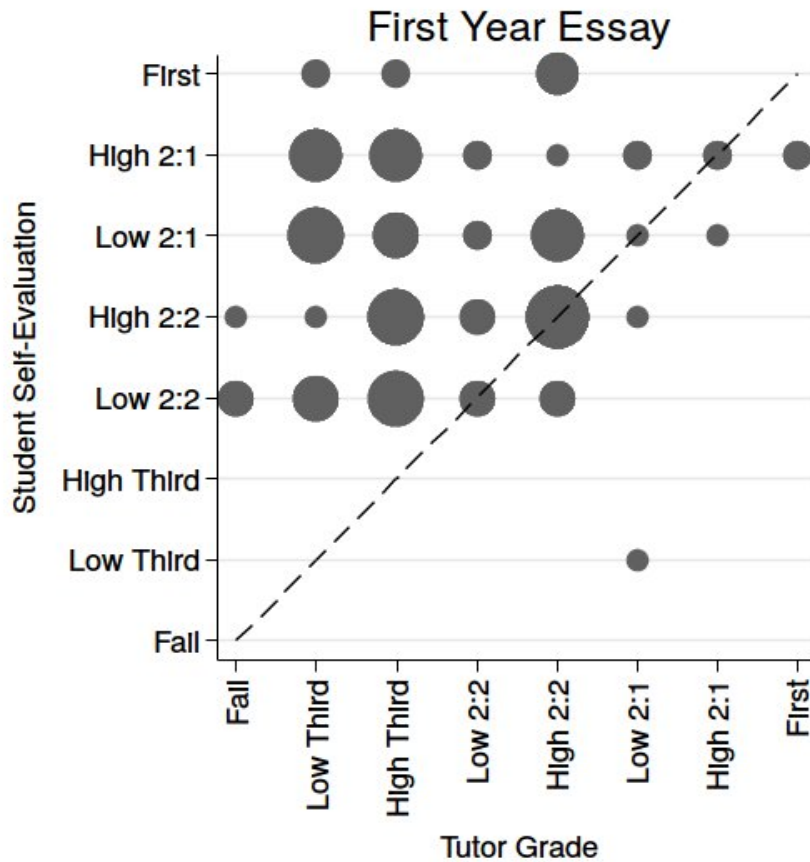
Question 5:

“The criteria  
used in  
marking  
have been  
clear in  
advance”



# Some data

## Student Self-Assessment vs Tutor Grade



● Student     - - - - - Tutor Grade = Self-Evaluation

# Effective Assessment and Feedback



- Sadler (1989): Students should be able to...
  - develop a shared understanding with the tutor of what a 'good' piece of work looks like
  - be able to identify weaknesses in their own work – recognise the 'gaps' between their own work and the standard.
  - know how to take appropriate actions to close any gaps



# Grade Descriptors

## 6.5 Grade Descriptors for Coursework and Examination Scripts

The Economics Department works to the following marking scheme:

Degree Class	Percentage Mark	Grade
I	70% +	A
II.1	60% - 69%	B
II.2	50% - 59%	C
III	40% - 49%	D
Fail	0% - 39%	F

The following Grade Descriptors explain the criteria by which marks are awarded to individual exam answers and to answers for coursework:

Class and mark range	Characteristics of answers	
	Style of question: Essay/argument	Style of question: Problem/mathematical
<b>First (A)</b> 70-100%	<p>Clear and thorough analysis, responding directly to the questions set, with rigorous arguments based (as appropriate) on extensive knowledge of relevant concepts, theory and empirical evidence.</p> <p><b>Marks above 80</b> should be used to signify novel and/or distinctive discussion, showing unusually clear insight and/or exceptional sophistication in approach.</p>	<p>Accurate derivation of answers to all parts of question, including parts requiring significant independent thought. Clear explanation and evidence of thorough understanding of the reasons for the method employed, and the intuition behind results obtained.</p> <p><b>Marks above 80</b> should be used to signify unusually clear insight and/or exceptional sophistication in approach.</p>
<b>Upper second (B)</b> 60-69%	<p>Well organised, clearly-expressed, and a direct response to the question. Evidence of good analytical skills and appropriate reading. Effective grasp of concepts. Use of relevant examples. Appropriate and well-explained use of relevant algebra or diagrams, integrated into the structure of the analysis.</p>	<p>Accurate answer to most parts of question, with incomplete answers only to sections requiring significant independent solution. Clear explanation of methods, results and intuition.</p>

<b>Lower second (C)</b> 50-59%	<p>Shows a general understanding of the question, with more limited relevant reading and use of examples. Competent reproduction of ideas and concepts from lectures and textbooks with little evidence of independent thought.</p>	<p>Accurate answer to all part of question requiring standard or routine approaches, with some explanation and intuition, reproducing lecture or textbook material on the reasons for methods employed and their interpretation.</p> <p>Errors should not betray significant misunderstanding of standard material.</p>
<b>Third (D)</b> 40-49%	<p>Answer shows some understanding of the question and the broader subject area, but shows little evidence of detailed knowledge or reading. Contains some mistakes, misunderstandings or irrelevant material. Relatively poor organisation and expression, and non-analytical approach.</p>	<p>Answer displays some surface knowledge of the subject matter of the question, but there are errors in some routine parts of the question</p> <p><i>and/or</i></p> <p>inadequate or inaccurate explanations.</p>
<b>Fail (F)</b> 20-39%	<p>Muddled, though may show some awareness of the general field.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Incorrect notes of limited relevance, but indicating some evidence of understanding in relation to the field in general.</p>	<p>Significant errors in most routine parts of the question</p> <p>and inadequate or inaccurate explanations,</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Incomplete notes indicating some evidence of understanding appropriate methods.</p>
<b>Fail (F)</b> 0-19%	<p>Little or nothing of relevance in answer to question.</p> <p><i>Or</i></p> <p>Comprehensive mistakes, failures and misunderstandings, showing that little or nothing of value has been understood from module material.</p>	<p>Little or nothing of relevance in answer to question.</p> <p><i>Or</i></p> <p>Comprehensive mistakes, failures and misunderstandings, showing that little or nothing of value has been understood from module material.</p>

Note: In answers where successive stages of a multi-part question depend on the results to earlier stages, appropriate credit should be given for intelligent and well-explained attempts to answer subsequent stages, albeit that an error made in an earlier stage invalidates the answer.

# Limitations with written criteria



“It is difficult for teachers to describe exactly what they are looking for, although they may have little difficulty in recognising a fine performance when it occurs. Teachers’ conceptions of quality are typically held, largely in unarticulated form, inside their heads as tacit knowledge”.

Sadler, 1989



# Feedback

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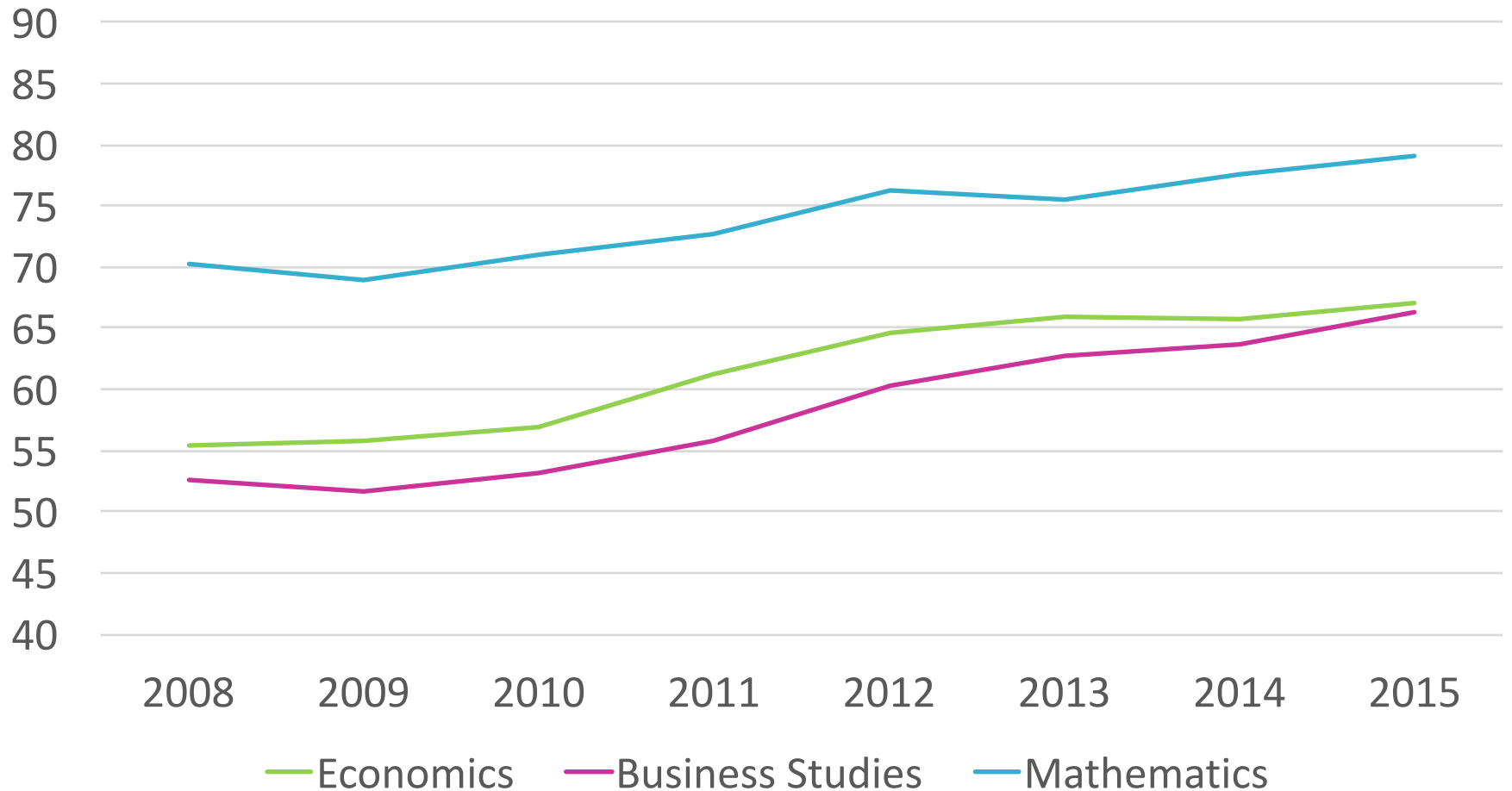
# NSS Questions on Feedback



- NSS questions
  5. “Feedback on my work has been prompt”
  6. “I have received detailed comments on my work”
  7. “Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand”

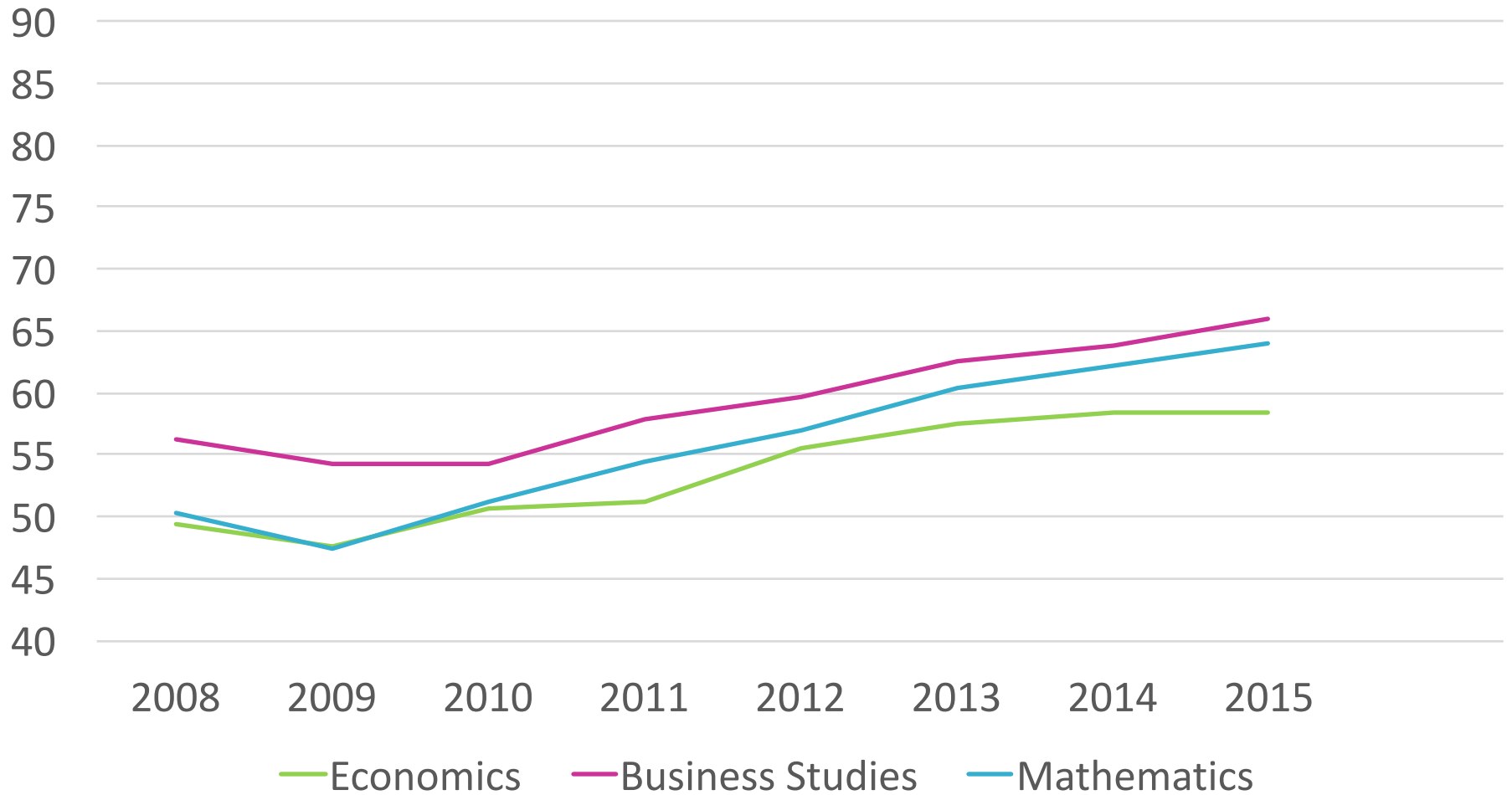
# Question 7: “Feedback on my work has been prompt”

% Positive Responses - Q7



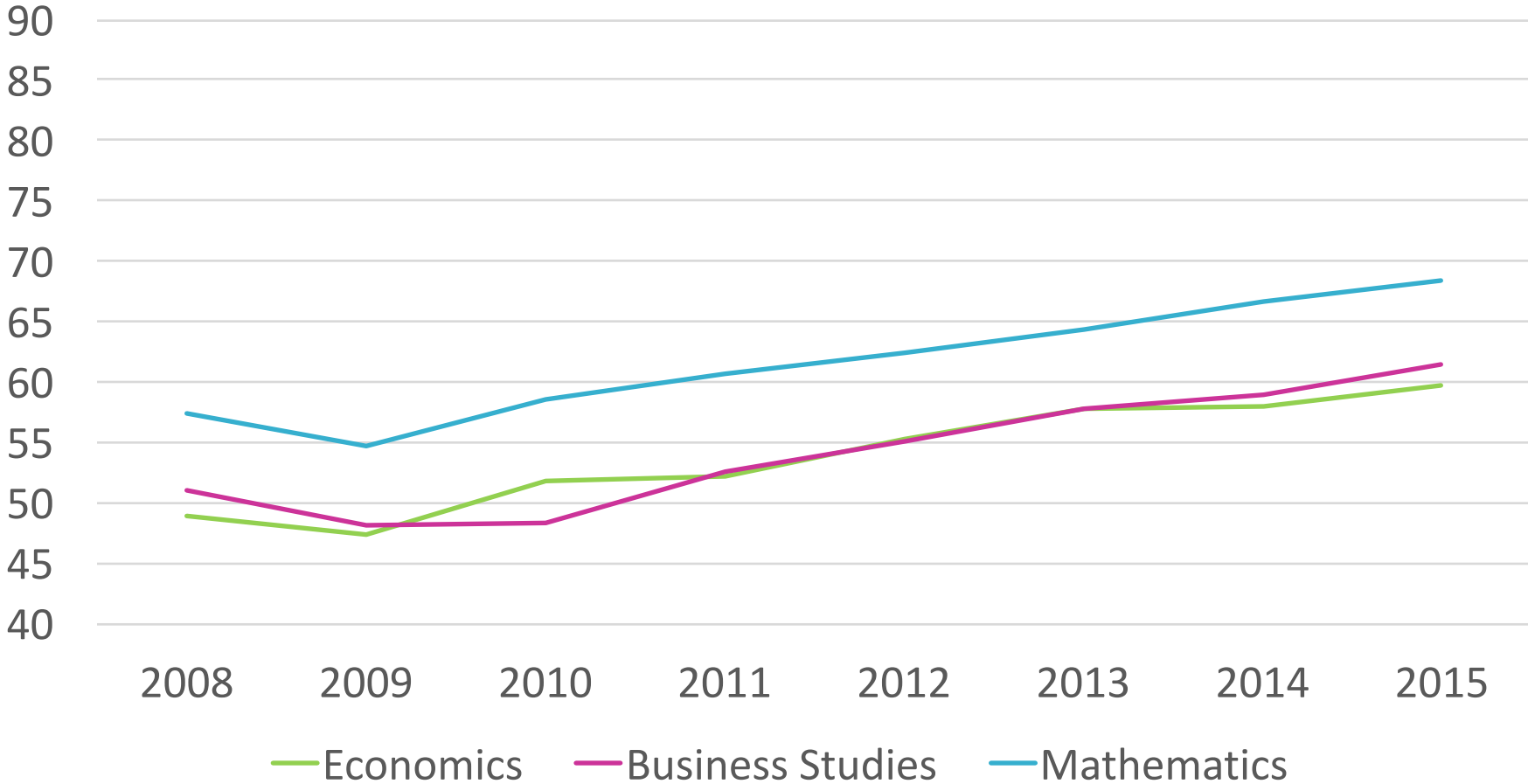
# Question 8: “I have received detailed comments on my work”

## % Positive Responses - Q8



# Question 9: “Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand”

## % Positive Responses - Q9



# Effectiveness of feedback



**SCHOOLIES**

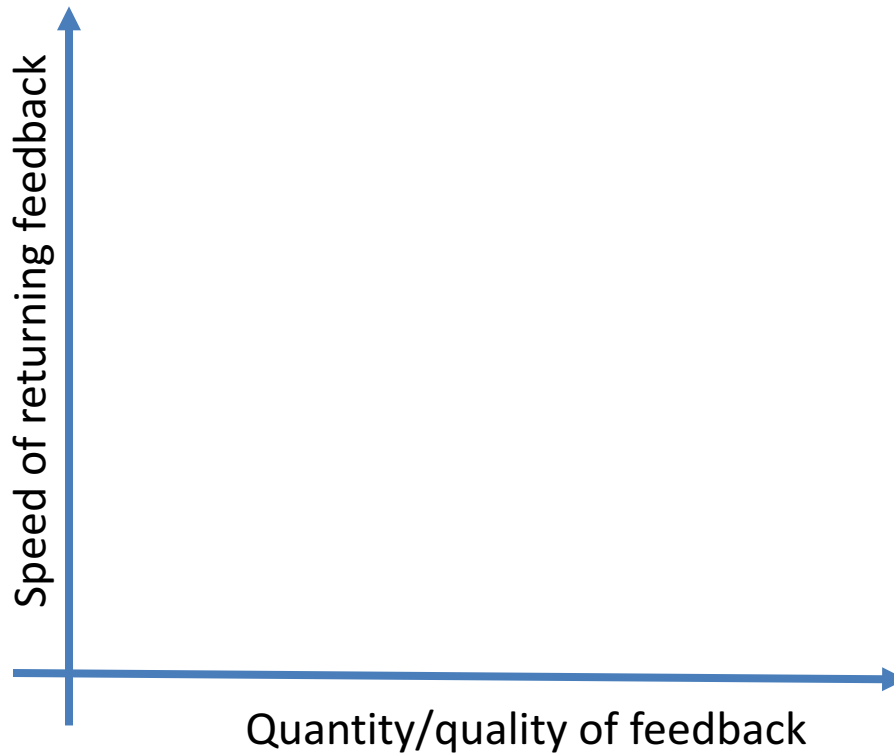
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*“There was no communication, for example if we had written an essay, it would be good [to have] just one sentence and maybe a small explanation on why you got the mark plus one sentence on how you could improve it.”*

Economics Network  
Student Survey

# Giving feedback: Optimality?





# Giving feedback

When and how do you give feedback?





# Different types of feedback

	AURAL	WRITTEN
Group		
Individual		

Lecturer feedback

Peer review/ feedback

Marking examples

Self-evaluation

Exemplars of strong  
(weak?) work



# Improve feedback

- Feedback on feedback
- Interactive cover sheet (Bloxham and Campbell, 2010).
  - Ask students what particular aspects of their work they would like feedback on
  - Self assessment
- Discuss expectations:
  - Exemplars – post submission
  - Always worth having for those who complain!!!



# Improve feedback

- Give timely feedback!
  - Provide some feedback quickly
- Feedback on different quality work needs to be different!
- When providing feedback remind the students it is feedback!!!
- Try innovative feedback methods



# Setting assignments and exams

# Critique an exam question



Consider a two-period economy in which the representative consumer maximizes the life-time utility function

$$u(c_1) + \beta u(c_2) \text{ s.t. } (1+t)c_1 + \frac{c_2}{(1+r)} = W,$$

where  $0 < \beta < 1$ ,  $W$  is the present value of after-tax life-time income,  $t$  is the VAT tax-rate and  $r$  is the interest rate.

(a) [3 marks] Show that the optimality condition relating  $c_1$  and  $c_2$  is the following:

$$u'(c_1) = (1+t)(1+r)\beta u(c_2)$$

(b) [3 marks] Suppose the utility function is  $u(c) = \ln(c)$ . Derive the optimal levels of  $c_1$  and  $c_2$ .

(c) [3 marks] The consumer receives incomes  $y_1$  and  $y_2$  and pays lump-sum taxes  $\tau_1$  and  $\tau_2$  in periods 1 and 2. Suppose the government uses all tax revenue to finance a project that costs  $G$  in period 1. Write down the inter-temporal budget constraint for the government.

(d) [5 marks] Suppose there is no VAT, i.e.  $t = 0$ . Use this model to explain Ricardian equivalence.

(e) [6 marks] Suppose there is VAT, i.e.  $t > 0$ . Show that the result you have derived in part (d) might not hold here. Explain your answer.

# Critique an exam question



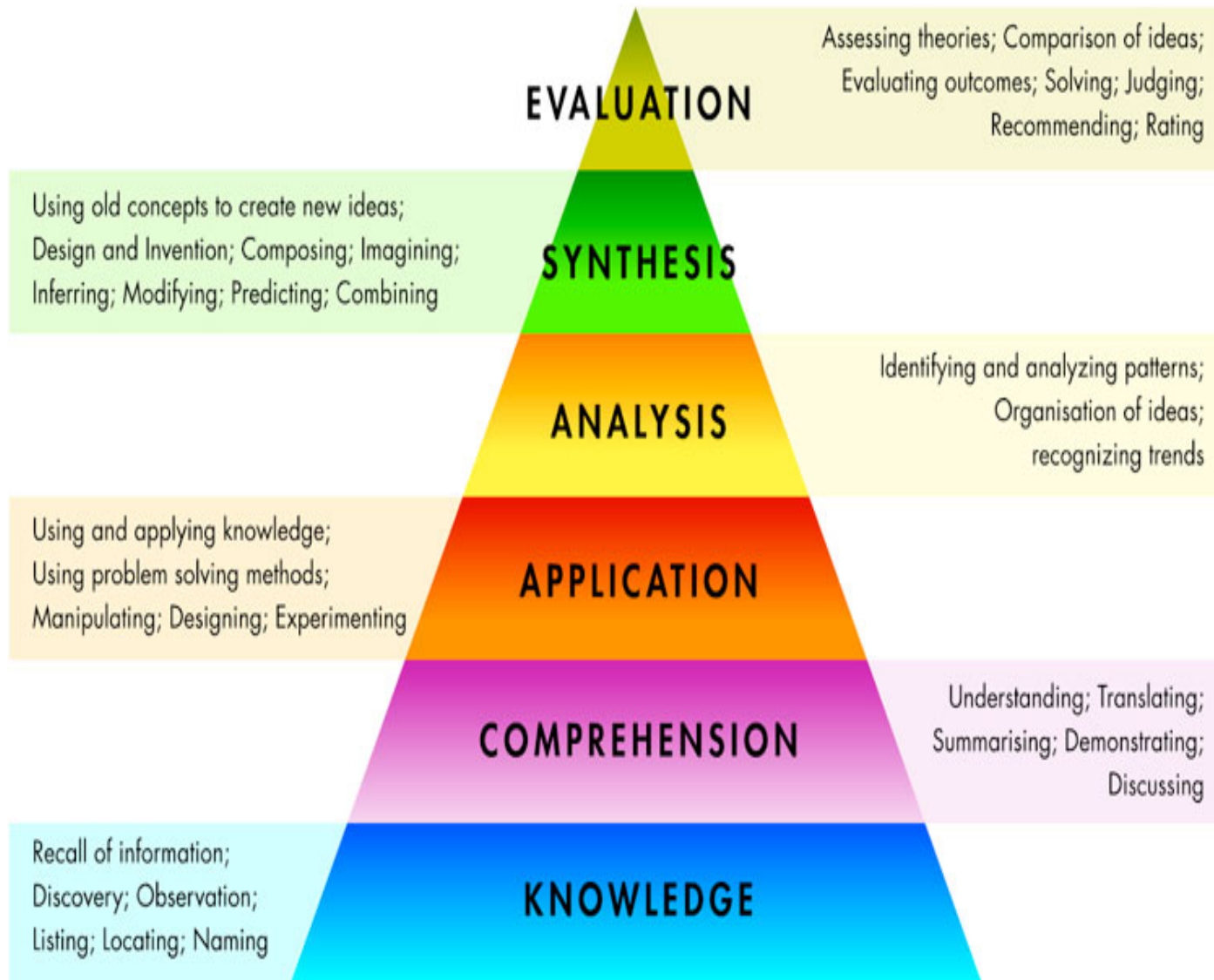
## *The econocracy: the perils of leaving economics to the experts* Joe Earle, Cahal Moran and Zach Ward-Perkins

“... the student is asked to solve the maths of a utility-maximising representative agent and show how tweaking the model affects the results.

On first glance one could be fooled by words like ‘income’ and ‘taxes’ into thinking that this exercise is related to the real world, but in fact it is a purely hypothetical exercise and reality is nowhere to be found.

These exam questions are used merely as a test of technical ability and of students’ capacity to think within a model, rather than as a way of critically engaging with what they have been taught.”

# Bloom's Taxonomy





# Improve assessment practice

- Give a lot of marks for the first few parts
- Ratchet up the difficulty
- Don't have too much choice
- Have a difficult or interpretive final part so that excellent students can distinguish themselves
- Use short answer questions to test lower order skills and essays for higher order.



# Improve assessment practice

- Infrequent assessment encourages irregular work patterns and surface learning
- Use variety within examinations and also questions.
- Avoid testing the same outcomes repeatedly
- Relate to learning goals/outcomes
- Use a variety of methods - see various assessment chapters in EN Handbook.