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# From authentic assessment to authenticity in assessment: broadening perspectives

Rola Ajjawi<sup>a</sup> , Joanna Tai<sup>a</sup> , Mollie Dollinger<sup>a</sup> , Phillip Dawson<sup>a</sup> ,  
David Boud<sup>a,b,c</sup>  and Margaret Bearman<sup>a</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Deakin University, Australia; <sup>b</sup>University of Technology Sydney, Australia; <sup>c</sup>Middlesex University, UK

## ABSTRACT

For over 30 years, the notion of authentic assessment in higher education has been adopted in academic practice, but it has managed to escape substantial critique. Although there have been multiple definitions and operationalisations of authentic assessment, current practice tends to foreground mimicking of work tasks. Authenticity cannot be completely unmoored from the reality of workplaces, the demands of the discipline, and the overall intended learning outcomes, however, a restricted view of how these aspects are represented in assessment can limit the sector's ability to prepare graduates who can engage with and shape the changing world. This paper elaborates the multiple challenges that some conceptualisations of authentic assessment contribute to assessment planning, recognising that assessment design always requires compromise. Three theoretical perspectives on authenticity are introduced to open new possibilities for authenticity in assessment. These are (1) psychological authenticity; (2) ontological fidelity; and (3) practice theory perspectives. The final section discusses how learning design might offer a means to operationalise theory. The paper concludes by suggesting that *authenticity* in assessment continues to hold value for the sector beyond its current uses through stronger theoretical conceptualisation and operationalisation of authenticity.

## KEYWORDS

Authentic assessment;  
authenticity; assessment;  
theory; task design

## Introduction

Higher education scholars have advocated for authentic assessment for over three decades. At face value, the word *authentic* indicates that something or someone is genuine or real. However, the concept of authentic assessment within higher education has been described as ambiguous, 'vaguely understood' and 'ill defined', making it challenging to implement (Kreber et al. 2007); its use in higher education has been described as disarticulated and ahistorical (McArthur 2023). Despite this, authenticity appears to be viewed as integral to addressing three contemporary challenges of assessment in higher education: the rise of artificial intelligence, threats to academic integrity and a need for greater student equity. Now that authenticity is being invoked as a potential solution to the sector's assessment problems, it may be both useful and timely to explore a breadth of ways to conceptualise authenticity.

**CONTACT** Rola Ajjawi  [rola.ajjawi@deakin.edu.au](mailto:rola.ajjawi@deakin.edu.au)

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Authentic assessment is commonly posited to be an inherently valuable enterprise. Various authors suggest that it can: prepare students for employment (Ashford-Rowe, Herrington, and Brown 2014); foster employability capabilities (Sokhanvar, Salehi, and Sokhanvar 2021); reduce cheating (see Ellis et al. 2020); prevent incursions due to generative artificial intelligence (AI) (Overono and Ditta 2023); promote inclusion (Tai et al. 2023); prompt internal motivation (Herrington, Reeves, and Oliver 2006); and enable students to deal with 'real-world' challenges through critical thinking and problem solving (Chabeli, Nolte, and Ndawo 2021). Across these definitions and purposes, there is a convergence of design of assessment tasks towards the reproduction of work tasks (Vu and Dall'Alba 2014; McArthur 2023). Those manifestations of authentic assessment that conflate the real world with the world of work by focusing solely on the reproduction of realistic work tasks, as McArthur 2023 argues, can be unnecessarily limiting of assessment design. While Sokhanvar, Salehi, and Sokhanvar (2021) review of the empirical literature on authentic assessment suggests students are more satisfied with increased engagement in learning activities and development of employability skills, it is difficult to know what these changes might be attributed to. Their review does not strictly define authentic assessment and the assumption that authentic assessment represents a uniform construct is countered by recent work arguing that it is a series of fragmented conceptualisations (Nieminen, Bearman, and Ajjawi 2023; McArthur 2023).

The chameleon-like nature of authentic assessment – where something that generally approximates realism becomes authentic – means authentic assessment is rhetorically useful since everyone can agree on its apparent value. Perhaps, the very ambiguity of the term promotes its perceived value: we can agree authenticity is a good thing without diving too deeply into what it means. Thus, we can project any number of desirable purposes on authentic assessment as an idea and gain credibility for them. McArthur (2023) addresses this critique by contextualising authenticity through the theoretical prism of social justice. She repositions authentic assessment as needing to shift from focus on work tasks to a focus on the student in relation to society. This implies a shift from focussing on task performance to focussing on why students, educators and society value the task, and the change in the purpose of authentic assessment from replicating the real-world status-quo to transforming society. While this is a significant contribution, if taken as the only way forwards, it may itself limit ways of designing assessment: there may be additional views of authentic assessment that also provide value.

In this paper, we seek to expand on McArthur's (2023) critique. We start by highlighting the tensions and limitations of current manifestations of authentic assessment, in particular that current conceptualisations of authentic assessment are too limiting in their focus on replication of work tasks. Then, we reorient the discussion by presenting three theoretical ways of thinking about authenticity that might hold value in moving the field forward and which may open new possibilities for assessment. These are (1) psychological authenticity; (2) ontological fidelity; and (3) practice theory perspectives. In the final section, we propose that a learning design approach might bridge various conceptualisations of authenticity and assessment design through context-specific, pedagogical decision-making. We conclude by suggesting that broader notions of *authenticity* in assessment are needed to prompt desirable educational goals.

## The challenges of authentic assessment design

While conceptualisations of authentic assessment may be fragmented, there is more commonality around how to operationalise it. Villarroel et al. (2019) identified that the most prevalent concept of authentic assessment in the literature is 'realism' and this is often narrowly defined to mean that the assessment task replicates the 'world of work' to develop competent employees (Gulikers 2007). Even in its most narrow sense of mimicking work practices, designing such assessments presents a complex task and therefore several frameworks exist to facilitate task design. Dimensions of authentic assessment include realism of context or tasks, cognitive

challenges to develop higher order thinking and evaluative judgement development (where students build their understandings and judgements about quality) (e.g. Gulikers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner 2004; Ashford-Rowe, Herrington, and Brown 2014; Kaider, Hains-Wesson, and Young 2017; Villarroel et al. 2019).

Authentic assessment design can also consider how the workplace contributes to the assessment (Bosco and Ferns 2014) but this introduces additional challenges. The literature often focusses on authentic assessment that takes place in the workplace, thus focussing on the role of workplace supervisors/preceptors in marking or making judgements about student achievement based on accreditation standards. While workplace assessors have been seen to be unreliable (e.g. McGill, van der Vleuten, and Clarke 2011) or too lenient (e.g. Jackson 2018), students value their contributions (Ajjawi et al. 2020). Beyond work-integrated learning contexts, some report engaging workplace practitioners in designing assessment and quality criteria (e.g. Jorre De St Jorre, Johnson and Oliver 2016). Others have created opportunities for students to make changes in the world through projects that are codesigned for and with workplace or society/community partners to address genuine problems (McArthur et al. 2022) or to transform disciplinary practices towards greater inclusivity (Forsyth and Evans 2019).

The focus on workplace partner involvement and graduate employability becomes problematic when considering non-vocational courses or courses loosely coupled with professions. In these instances, designing for a workplace task becomes more difficult when we cannot predict which world of practice a graduate might enter. Indeed, graduates in most fields do not ultimately work in the discipline they have studied. For example, only a minority of Australian science graduates work in science (Palmer et al. 2018), so authentic assessment that focuses on working in a scientific job might feel authentic to an anticipated career pathway but fail to represent what most students practise after graduation.

One of the limitations of focusing on replication of work activities is that it might not adequately prepare graduates for the future (McArthur 2023). If tasks are designed to only replicate current practice, any development of evaluative judgement is situated in the here and now, and this can be limiting if we want students to not only engage with, but also potentially shape, future practices. 'Future authentic' has been posed as a potential approach where assessment: 'faithfully represents not just the current realities of the discipline in practice, but the likely future realities of that discipline' (Dawson and Bearman 2020, 292), and uses authentic scaffolds (Dawson and Bearman 2020). But how can assessment in the here-and-now predict what future practices might look like? This is most obviously exemplified through the changing nature of the digital environment: what may be authentic now can be radically altered by for example the introduction of new AI tools (Bearman, Nieminen, and Ajjawi 2023). A critical literature review of research on authentic assessment identified a dearth of reported sophisticated authentic assessment designs that grapple with the complexities of the digital world (Nieminen, Bearman, and Ajjawi 2023). The authors conclude that authentic assessment in its current guise is not 'fit for purpose' with respect to preparing students for a digital world.

Authentic assessment has been raised as a solution to a variety of problems that it may not actually address. For example, authentic assessment has been suggested as a way to make contract cheating either impossible or unlikely. However, research into the sorts of assignments produced by contract cheating sites suggests that they can, and do, respond to many kinds of authentic assessment (Ellis et al. 2020). Similarly, authentic assessment has been suggested as a solution to the problem of generative AI in assessment, as it is regarded by some to be more difficult for generative AI to undertake (Overono and Ditta 2023). However, work in engineering education shows that some authentic tasks such as project-based written work and reflective tasks can already be completed at least at a borderline passing standard (Nikolic et al. 2023). Authenticity is regarded by some as a solution to integrity problems, however evidence in support of such a view is curiously absent. While it could be argued that students may see authentic assessment as more meaningful and may therefore be more likely to complete the work

themselves, authentic assessment is still far from being an integrity panacea (Sutherland-Smith and Dawson 2022).

A final challenge is that 'authenticity' is in the eye of the beholder. No matter how carefully we design assessment tasks to be authentic, our students or our workplace partners may not see them as such. And when there are multiple stakeholders, whose view of authenticity matters? Students' experiences of authenticity in assessment are dependent on the contexts and settings in which they undertake such assessment, and are also interpreted through their own aspirations and understandings of authenticity (Ajjawi et al. 2020). Thus, no matter the design, that the task is an assessment poses a threat to perceptions of authenticity, as the high stakes consequences of many assessments can be inherently inauthentic (Veen 2021). For example, reflection is valued in many professions. However, when it is introduced as part of assessment it can drive students towards personal inauthenticity, through dishonesty or embellishment (Birden and Usherwood 2013; Maloney et al. 2013), perverting the very reflective capability that it is meant to assess and develop. Thus, assessing reflection risks driving performative work that is written to be read by an assessor rather than as a source of learning (Boud and Walker 1998). When assessment is perceived as inauthentic by students, this can lead to cynicism and instrumentalism, distorting learning (Elmholdt et al. 2016; Ajjawi et al. 2020). At the same time, authenticity cannot be completely unmoored from reality of workplaces, the demands of the discipline, and the overall intended learning outcomes.

Despite all these challenges, there is sustained interest in authentic assessment. The question remains whether the time spent on implementing some manifestations of authentic assessment is always worth it. If we are to continue to use the term, we need to know why we are using it and what value its adoption contributes within higher education.

## **Broadening theoretical perspectives on authenticity**

So far, we have argued that current operationalisations of authentic assessment with its preoccupation with realism can be limiting. The nuances of the discussion around authenticity suggest that authentic assessment is not an absolute but exists on a multi-dimensional spectrum that extends towards 'more authentic'. It may be most fruitful to focus on elements or aspects of *authenticity* in an assessment task rather than a binary authentic/inauthentic. Further, we make the distinction between the desire to design for authenticity and the experience of the assessment, which might be perceived as authentic or otherwise.

We suggest now that authenticity can draw from a variety of theoretical underpinnings, perspectives and approaches, all of which add depth and the necessary complexity inherent to the term itself. In seeking to revitalise the field and to open new avenues for research and practice, we introduce three theoretical orientations of authenticity to apply to assessment. These are: psychological authenticity, ontological fidelity and practice theory perspectives. These are summarised in Table 1 and further elaborated. Each offers a particular lens for working with authenticity, that acknowledges intricacies across human actors, contexts and relationships that ultimately inform 'what is authenticity?' and 'how can this be applied to assessment?' We suggest that while these perspectives will not address all the challenges raised in the previous section, it might allow for an expansion of assessment designs and more attention to student experiences and understandings of authenticity in assessment.

### ***Psychological authenticity***

If authenticity is in the eye of the beholder, then it is important to consider how an individual makes judgements about how authentic something is. In psychology, this has been both conceptualised and empirically explored. Here, authenticity judgements are made in comparison to a reference source, either an internal mental reference point or an external source. There are

**Table 1.** Orientation of theoretical perspectives on authenticity and implications for assessment.

Perspective	Conceptualisation of authenticity	Implications for assessment
Psychological authenticity	Perceptions of authenticity are matters of individual judgement within the broader social realm. Aspects which contribute to judging authenticity include context, background, environment, self-perception and values.	Learners judge authenticity for themselves based on information within the task alongside shared understandings about work and society, and their own context and background. Educators should highlight relevant features of assessment tasks that could contribute to authenticity, including how it relates to learners' values and goals.
Ontological fidelity	Acknowledges alternative realities and modes of existence. Authenticity is not primarily about the extent to which tasks represent knowledge and skills needed in practice, but whether they are part of a convincing narrative of real people and problems.	Learners experience authenticity through tasks that are storied and embodied with real people and places, and tasks through which they can identify their becoming selves.
Authenticity and complex social practice	Practices emerge through deeply entangled social and material relations. Authenticity is therefore messy, complex and ambiguous, which is often in tension with what is needed for learning.	Genuine explanations and dialogue support tasks to resonate with the complexity and ambiguity of the practice world.

several dimensions in which authenticity can be judged, depending on the target (which could be an external object, or could even be the self) and what matters to the person making the judgement (Newman and Smith 2016).

Newman (2019) outlines three dimensions. First, categorical judgements or subjective classification of types of things. For example, is this assessment task something an engineer would perform? Second, historical judgements evaluate the connection to a particular time or place. For example, when and where did this clinical scenario within the assessment task occur? Finally, judgements about representation of values, seeking consistency between internal morals and external expressions. For example, do the assessment criteria account for ethical issues in marketing?

In contrast to the relatively stable authenticity of objects, authenticity of self has been suggested to be something that is timebound and can fluctuate across situations (i.e. it is not a fixed trait of individuals). Within this framing, Schmader and Sedikides (2018) propose that self-authenticity is about an individual's perceived fit with their environment across three dimensions: how their understandings of themselves appear congruent with their environment, how their goals are facilitated or achieved through their interactions with their environment, and lastly, how others in that environment accept and validate them (i.e. social fit).

Within higher education, the categorical and historical dimensions of authenticity are generally well covered in existing design frameworks in terms of types of tasks, and their connection to (work) time and place (e.g. Villarroel et al. 2018). The additional dimensions around values and self-authenticity may add a key ingredient for students' perceptions of authenticity in assessment. For example, considering how assessment can better promote ethical and sustainable practices, or tackle issues of diversity and inclusion, could be important in preparing graduates to deal with future challenges. Authenticity of self could also be a key consideration in finding ways for assessment to promote student goals, agency and self-expression. Bearing in mind that authenticity of self is always in flux, processes and products of assessment might need to be adjusted to support individual development, and students could be asked to articulate the ways in which the assessment supports them personally, to be certain that such alignments exist.

### **Ontological fidelity**

While assessment in the academy has typically focused on knowledge and skills, some scholars have argued that knowing and being cannot be separated (Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2007). In other

words, more than knowledge and skill acquisition is needed for becoming a graduate. The writings of Dall'Alba have set forth important arguments for ontological considerations in authentic assessment, following Barnett (2005, 795) who suggests that 'instead of knowing the world, being-in-the-world has to take primary place in the conceptualizations that inform university teaching'. The key contention then is that learning and knowing are fundamentally embodied and enacted by people. Therefore, the question of assessment would not only be about what students know, but who they are becoming. While some construe this literally and simplistically as measuring identity (e.g. Cruess, Cruess, and Steinert 2016), which we do not advocate, others consider how assessment might create space for students to integrate their knowing, acting and being within a broad range of practices (Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2007).

Vu and Dall'Alba (2014, 786) claim that 'Assessment is authentic when students are encouraged to respond to the call to be authentic and supported in striving for authenticity'. Such assessments prompt students to be critical of knowledge and the way they lead their lives and seek new possibilities to empower them to establish themselves in the world. Thus, authentic assessment is not about specific attributes of the task but a quality of educational processes. Examples of activities include opportunities to critique practice, discursive interaction in assessment, collaboration with peers and society, and challenging assumptions (Vu and Dall'Alba 2014). In line with this, students judge assessment to be authentic when it enables them to incorporate aspects of their current and future selves into their work through learning plans, performance-based assessment (i.e. beyond writing), dialogue or reflection (Ajjawi et al. 2020).

We build on Vu and Dall'Alba's notions by introducing the concept of ontological fidelity (MacLeod et al. 2023) from the medical education literature. Ontological fidelity emphasises how doing a task engages with the life and aspirations of the learner rather than seeking to capture how to address particular symptoms in medical practice. That is, do learners see tasks as meaningful and related to their own emerging lives or the lives of those with whom they will practice? Ontological fidelity is achieved when students can imagine what they are doing as part of an embodied story in the world, one within which they can identify and see themselves. For example, could a student imagine their future self enacting a similar task in a context they might inhabit? When tasks are overly abstracted from their contexts, complexities and narratives, and characters and events are seen as merely placeholders for a technical problem, ontological fidelity is lost.

### ***Authenticity and complex social practice***

Thinking more deeply about what constitutes the 'social world' can also influence how we might conceptualise authentic assessment. Over the last three decades, there has been a shift towards considering 'practices' as the organising feature of social life (Schatzki 2002; Nicolini 2012). Such perspectives generally hold that the social consists of many loosely organised and evolving collections of activities and connections between peoples and their material contexts (Nicolini 2017). A practice is formed from unpredictable, messy and complex interactions: what Schon (1983, 42) called the 'swampy lowlands, where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical solution and usually involve problems of greatest human concern'. This makes intuitive sense: any site of social interaction, be it a workplace, a sporting club or a university, is where people, tasks and objects interact in ways that are somewhat predictable but also entirely open ended. With this indeterminacy comes complexity and ambiguity.

We often strip complexity and ambiguity out within education because it makes learning (and, arguably, assessment design) too challenging. For example, learners may be distracted by complexity rather than focussing on key learning outcomes. Ambiguity can interfere with the assessor's ability to consistently judge student's work, let alone assign a mark or grade to it. But at the same time, it is this messiness that reflects the world (the academy included). Thus, in

attempts to simplify, we may remove that which we most want students to learn. For example, reducing communication skills to behavioural criteria, such as eye contact, can preclude the desired creative, holistic context-dependent communication displayed by experienced practitioners (Salmon and Young 2011).

This tension is often already intuitively understood by assessment designers: learning through completing a replica task can never be the same as completing a real task. Students do assessment tasks to learn or to achieve grades – these tend not to be reasons driving practitioners who are transacting an established practice, which has products, goals or outcomes that are likely to matter to others in addition to the practitioners themselves. However, what the practice perspective alerts us to is that being a student is also a social practice (Kemmis et al. 2012). Understanding that there are two practice worlds at play here gives an insight into how to work with this tension of simplification versus realism, which can both support and detract from learning.

In working towards authenticity, assessment designers can talk with students about these disjunctions. This aligns with calls for educators to expose their own rationales (Markauskaite and Goodyear 2017). Authenticity may be promoted through a genuine dialogue about different purposes and meanings associated with a task. For example, educators can ask: what is the meaning and purpose of this task for you as a student? What is the meaning and purpose of this task for me as an educator? What type of purpose or meaning might this task hold in the broader world of practices? As part of this educators can explain what complexities and ambiguities are being left out and why. Perhaps, to promote complexity, educators can work with students to adjust the assessment, in real time. This can be relationally intensive, but this may be the price of working with complexity.

## Designing authenticity in assessment

Regardless of the theoretical complexities of authenticity, pragmatic decisions need to be made to embed it within assessment. The learning design literature offers some insight towards implementing a particular view of authenticity. As psychological, ontological and practice theory perspectives suggest, authenticity is an inherently subjective concept and prone to uncontrollable human factors, much like the learning experience itself.

In influential work by Goodyear (2005) this nuance is distinguished in learning through the distinction between ‘design time’ and ‘learn time’. Through these lenses educators accept that while they can design *for* learning as they imagine it to occur, they must also acknowledge the importance of learn time, where students will exhibit agency over how they choose to engage with materials, networks or other pre-determined scaffolding of the learning experience (Goodyear, Carvalho, and Yeoman 2021). In other words, the assessment design can only encapsulate specific, pre-determined potentialities for authenticity, rather than dictate the entirety of how authenticity will present across design and learn time. Through a realism lens the question of authenticity typically resides outside the student experience: the task appears real to a teacher or external party. In contrast, and in alignment with ‘learn time’, the three additional perspectives outlined have a common stance, that students’ sense-making and interpretation of authenticity must always be considered, against a more specific conception of authenticity. The experience of particular ways of being graded or evaluated as part of ‘learn time’ may also contribute to or detract from perceptions of authenticity, and again, the process of evaluation (including the content and focus of rubrics or criteria) might need to be considered from multiple perspectives.

Educators should not be discouraged by the acknowledgement that the experience of authenticity cannot be entirely designed or completely controlled. The very notion that authenticity varies, and is an expansive topic, is a potentially fruitful launching point for discussion between educators, students and external partners in collaborating or co-designing learning and assessment (e.g.



Twyford and Dean 2021). In particular, co-design with students may further enhance student engagement and motivation in their learning experiences (e.g. Higgins et al. 2019), as well as support teachers' reflexive pedagogical practices on how they can support diverse conceptualisations of authenticity in learning experiences. The co-design process itself, as a mechanism to produce feedback and dialogue in students' performances, could be positioned as assessment for learning, providing students with a more active role in their learning experiences (Kelter et al. 2021).

While elevating authenticity to go beyond replication of work complicates assessment design, it does not necessarily hinder its scalability. To illustrate, work by Bearman and colleagues advocates for learning designs that create learning patterns which can be embedded across courses or programs of study. Learning patterns are modular, codifiable, sequenced varieties of learning that can overlay or nest within each other to fit or adapt to specific circumstances (Bearman, Lambert, and O'Donnell 2021). In the realm of authenticity, these could be developed within disciplines or be cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature and could provide an initial structure of authenticity to embed it in the learning experience (e.g. Olsen, Glad, and Filstad 2018). Learning patterns also help educators consider the more nuanced aspects of authenticity, for example the values-based dimensions of authenticity, of not only how does the task represent work, but how does it represent the type of work that a person wants to contribute to?

## Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we have set out a range of perspectives to help (re)conceptualise the problem of authenticity and how it relates to assessment design. We are far from the first authors seeking to broaden the field's use of authenticity. The work of Vu and Dall'Alba (2014) presents a valuable ontological perspective on authentic assessment, and the work of McArthur (2023) usefully positions authenticity as promoting student transformation of society. Clearly, notions of authenticity are multiple. We have built on these views by offering three alternate theoretically informed readings of authenticity. This provides richness – and we suggest, relevance – but requires careful and thoughtful engagement in the design and implementation of authenticity in assessment.

In understanding authenticity as multiple, there is no singular means of approaching authentic assessment. Design choices need to be made about what dimensions or aspects of authenticity matter in a particular assessment (Ajjawi et al. 2021). The features, purposes, world views and positionality we want to advance when designing for authenticity must be considered carefully. Limitations must also be recognised; assessment design is always an ideal and what emerges and is experienced might be different from what was intended. How various stakeholders might interpret authenticity needs to be evaluated and carefully included.

It is important to note that assessment design always involves 'satisficing' – making optimal decisions – among many different, and sometimes incompatible, requirements. Common compromises are often made in deciding which of the many purposes of assessment need foregrounding, for example, assurance of learning or promoting learning and growth. Moreover, van der Vleuten (1996) highlighted multiple dimensions that must be considered when designing assessment that require compromise including educational impact, reliability, validity and resource implications. Compromises are regularly made among feasibility factors such as cost, workload and effectiveness. Yet we must continue to design and implement assessment despite these fundamental challenges. Thus, considering how to make an assessment more 'authentic' may have to be weighed against other concerns.

In a time of AI, perhaps we should be more focussed on how we support learners' capabilities for the unpredictable future world through supporting lifelong learning capabilities such as evaluative judgement (Bearman and Ajjawi 2023). Orienting assessment design towards explicitly developing student judgements of authenticity might be of benefit, especially if students are to make these sorts of judgements in the future. The different perspectives on authenticity we have

presented could address this, since they require us, and potentially our students, to consider what claims of authenticity are being made and what evidence exists to support this. Useful questions include ‘which notions of authenticity are we incorporating into any given assessment task, and why?’, ‘what are the implications for the student, for their learning and for their becoming?’, and ‘how are student perspectives incorporated?’

We do not suggest that every act of assessment should incorporate all, or even any, perspectives of authenticity. Instead, we encourage thoughtful consideration of which aligns or best informs the purposes and contexts of the assessment. Which, if any, notion of authenticity appropriately resonates for each situation? We need to focus on what we are seeking to achieve, to look towards values to underpin assessment design, and to acknowledge the complexity and compromises that necessarily need to be made.

We suggest there is value in the sector embracing broader perspectives on authenticity that open assessment design avenues. In its current usage, too often authenticity is applied solely through a lens of task attributes. The seemingly simple semantic move – from authentic assessment to *authenticity in assessment* – opens the possibilities for assessment design to be more transformational. This move also attunes us to authenticity being an emergent quality of educational processes that students engage in rather than a quality of the assessment task. The perspectives offered in this paper resist any unilateral decisions that an assessment is authentic merely through design. We recognise that compromise is inevitable, as there always is in assessment and the world at large. Nevertheless, a clearer focus is required when working out in any given situation what form of authenticity in assessment is needed and why.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributors

**Rola Ajjawi** is Professor of Educational Research at the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University, Australia, where she has led an extensive programme of research into student failure and success, with particular interest in equity, feedback, and workplace learning cultures.

**Joanna Tai** is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University, Australia. She researches student experiences of learning and assessment from university to the workplace, including feedback and assessment literacy, evaluative judgement, and peer learning.

**Mollie Dollinger** is Senior Lecturer of Learning Futures at Deakin University. Her research interests include student equity, students as partners, and work-integrated learning.

**Phillip Dawson** is Professor and Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University, Australia. He researches higher education assessment, with a focus on feedback and cheating.

**David Boud** is Alfred Deakin Professor and Foundation Director of the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning at Deakin University, Australia. He is also Emeritus Professor at the University of Technology Sydney and Professor of Work and Learning at Middlesex University. His current work is in the areas of assessment for learning in higher education, academic formation, and workplace learning.

**Margaret Bearman** is Professor with the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE), Deakin University, Australia. Her current research investigates feedback, assessment, and digital learning in higher and professional education, with particular interests in sociomateriality and clinical contexts.

## ORCID

Rola Ajjawi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0651-3870>

Joanna Tai  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8984-2671>

Mollie Dollinger  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1105-9051>  
 Phillip Dawson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4513-8287>  
 David Boud  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6883-2722>  
 Margaret Bearman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6862-9871>

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