DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

Teaching, learning and personal tutoring: A virtual mini-conference

11 September 2020

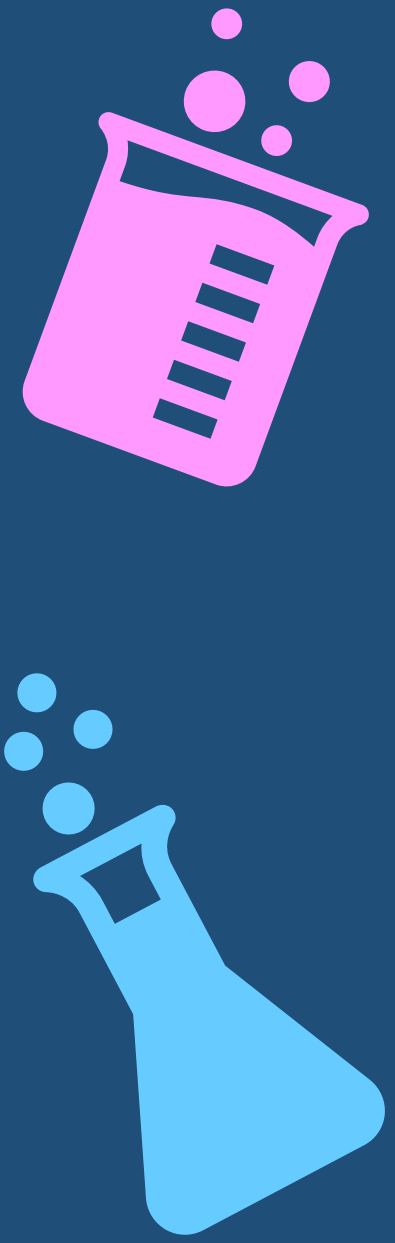
CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC INNOVATION

Julia Reeve, Angela O'Sullivan & Leisa Nichols-Drew

"All STEAMEd Up: Let's take the pressure out of assessment"

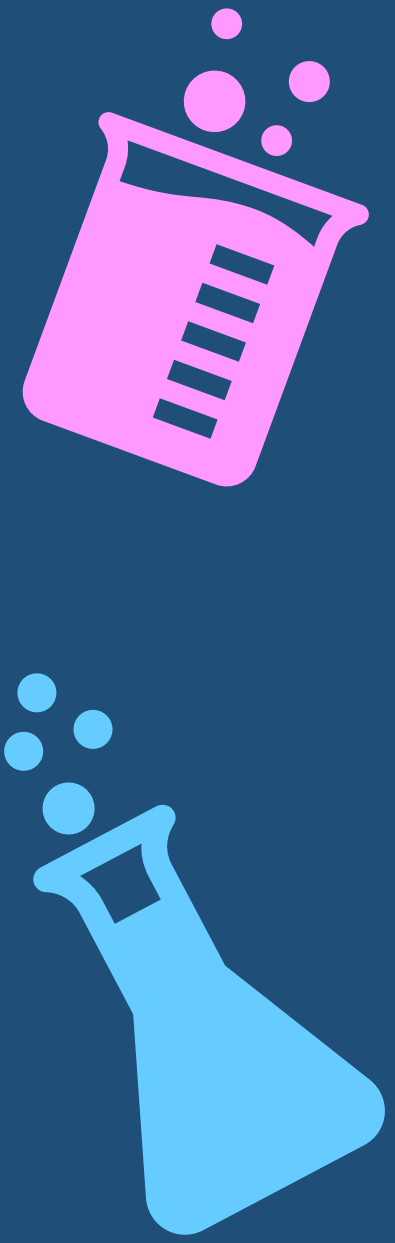
from analogue to digital

“…play is important in countering the implicit threat that occurs when we are in transitional spaces – between worlds, between social classes and in alien educational settings.” (Sinfield 2019)



Background

- Playful, hands-on workshop, focusing on taking the stress out of assessment in lab settings, accepted for Advance HE Learning & Teaching conference July 2020
- “The thrills and spills of dealing with serial dilutions mixed with the difficult dynamics of group work creates an effervescent environment”
- This session showcases the way the workshop was creatively adapted into a pre-recorded audio-visual presentation for the online conference

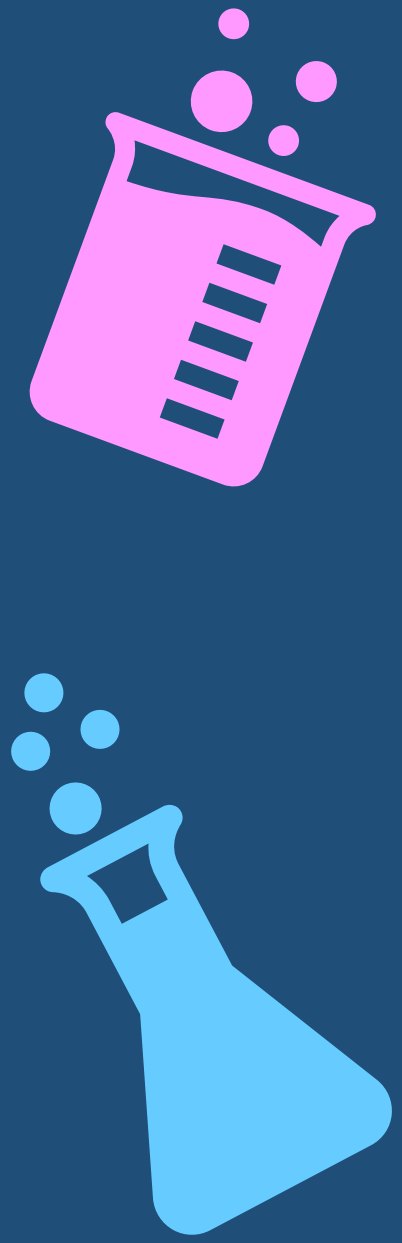


Original workshop plan

1. Mock practical laboratory assessment using coloured liquids and plastic containers. Workshop leaders to create interventions within each group to ensure that things do not go to plan!
2. Reflection on and sharing of ‘laboratory’ experiences using Lego models
3. Group members to offer Lego ‘gifts’ as responses to one another’s stories, adding to the visual narrative

Original workshop aimed to:

- Provide experience of ‘unsuccessful’ group assessments
- Reduce anxiety through a playful approach
- Foster reflection on own assessment experiences
- Foster empathy and compassion for other learners
- Raise awareness of diverse perspectives on assessment
- Provoke consideration of alternative assessment strategies for diverse learners

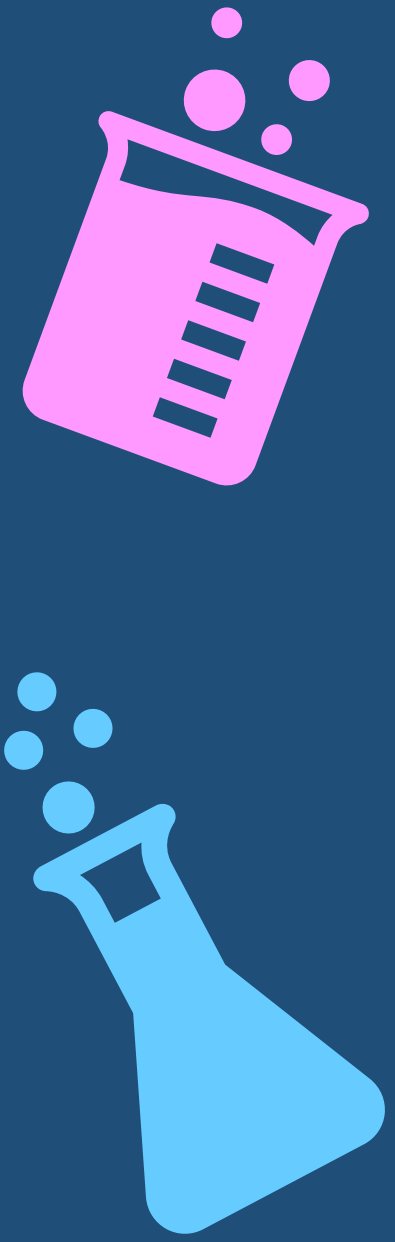


Key themes

- Group work and assessments
- Lab-based assessment
- Playful learning
- Compassionate pedagogy
- Inclusion
- Reflection
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Affective learning domain

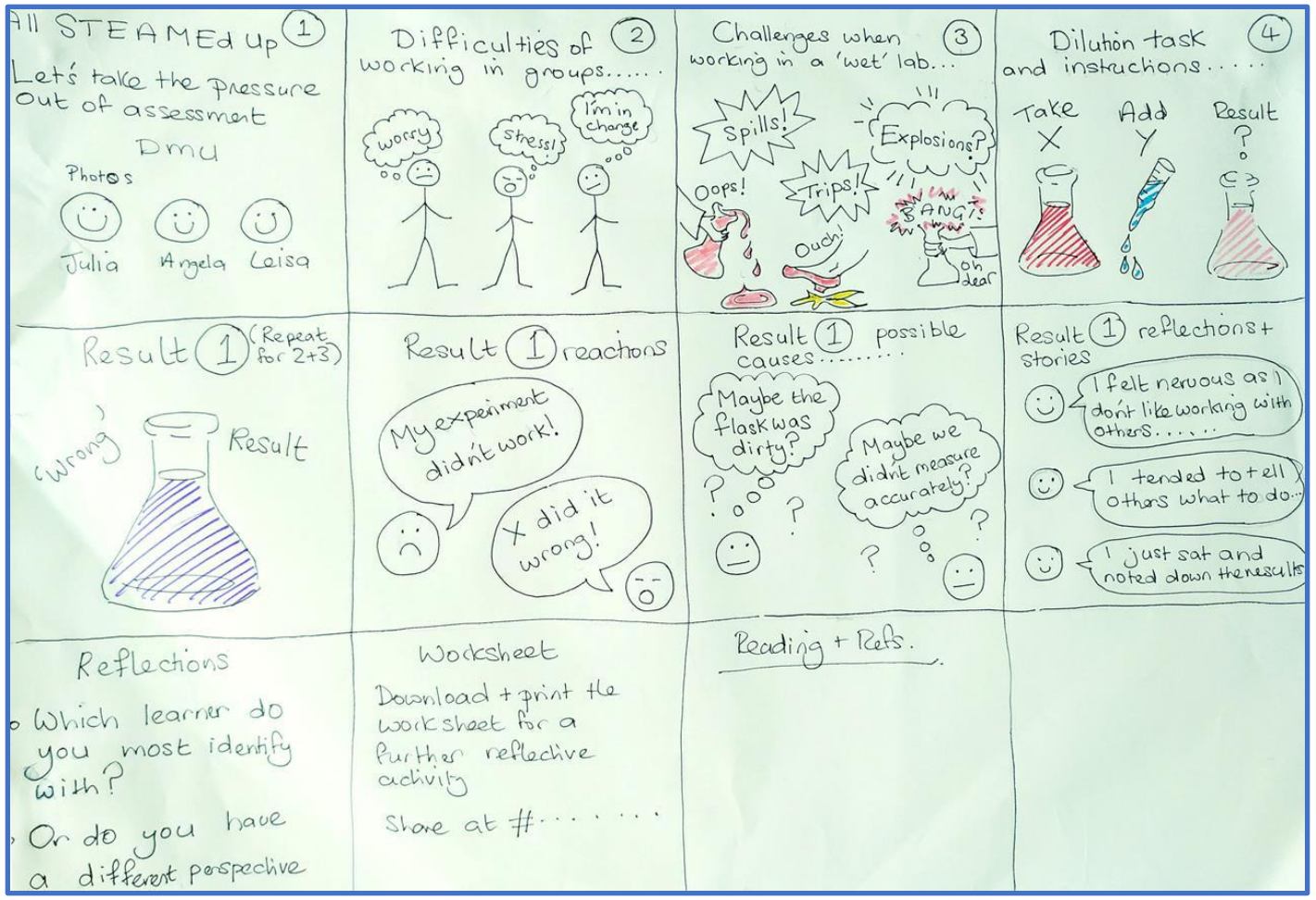
Practical challenges/solutions

- Collaboration:
  - Teams meetings to collaborate on ideas/shared photos & drawings
- Materials:
  - Used online sources including groceries to obtain materials for ‘experiments’
  - Used Lego to create ‘learners’
- Learning environment:
  - Created ‘kitchen sink’ experiments
  - Used video of ‘experiments’ with voice-over from ‘learners’



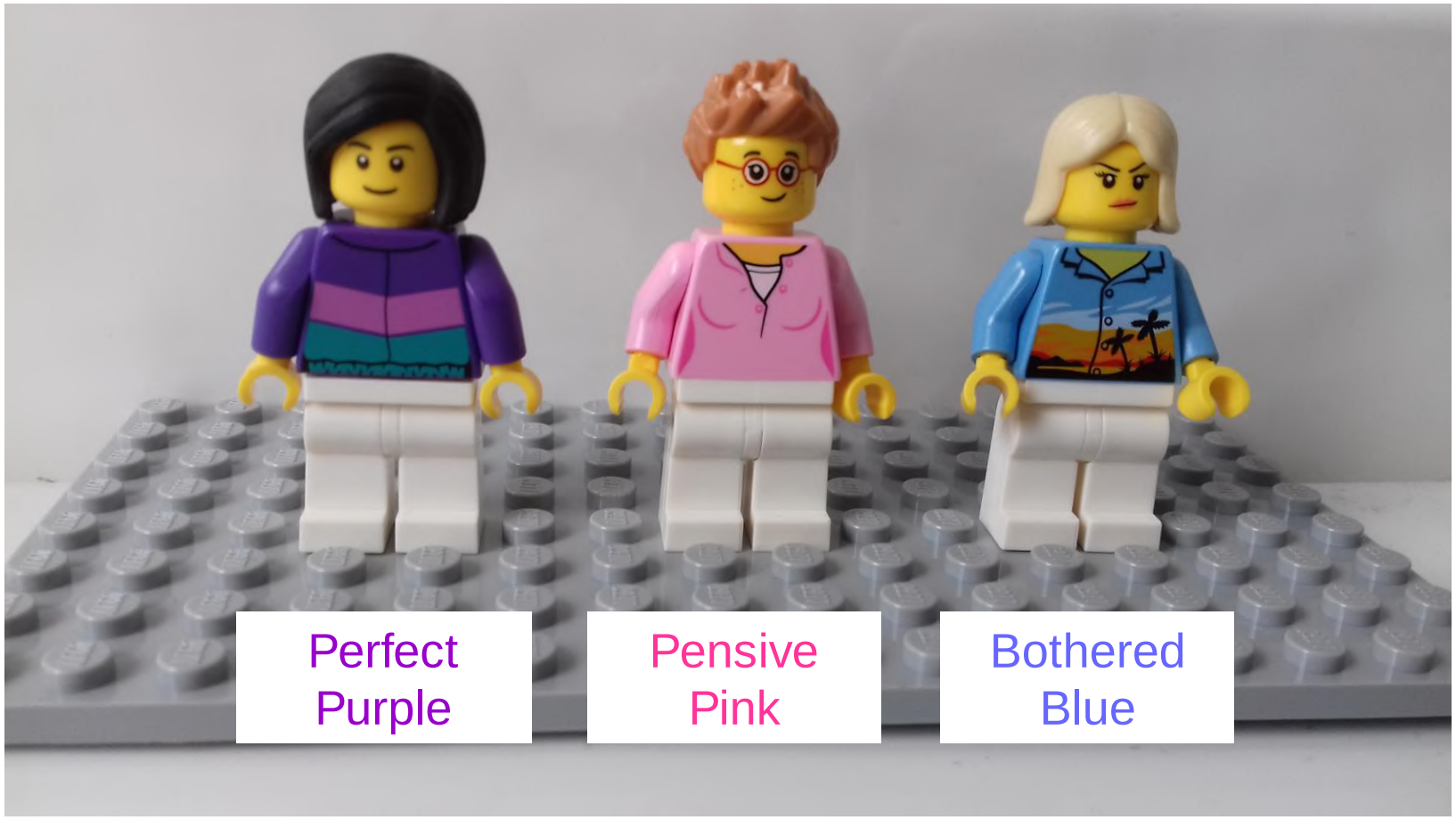
What did we do?

- Storyboarding of workshop activities



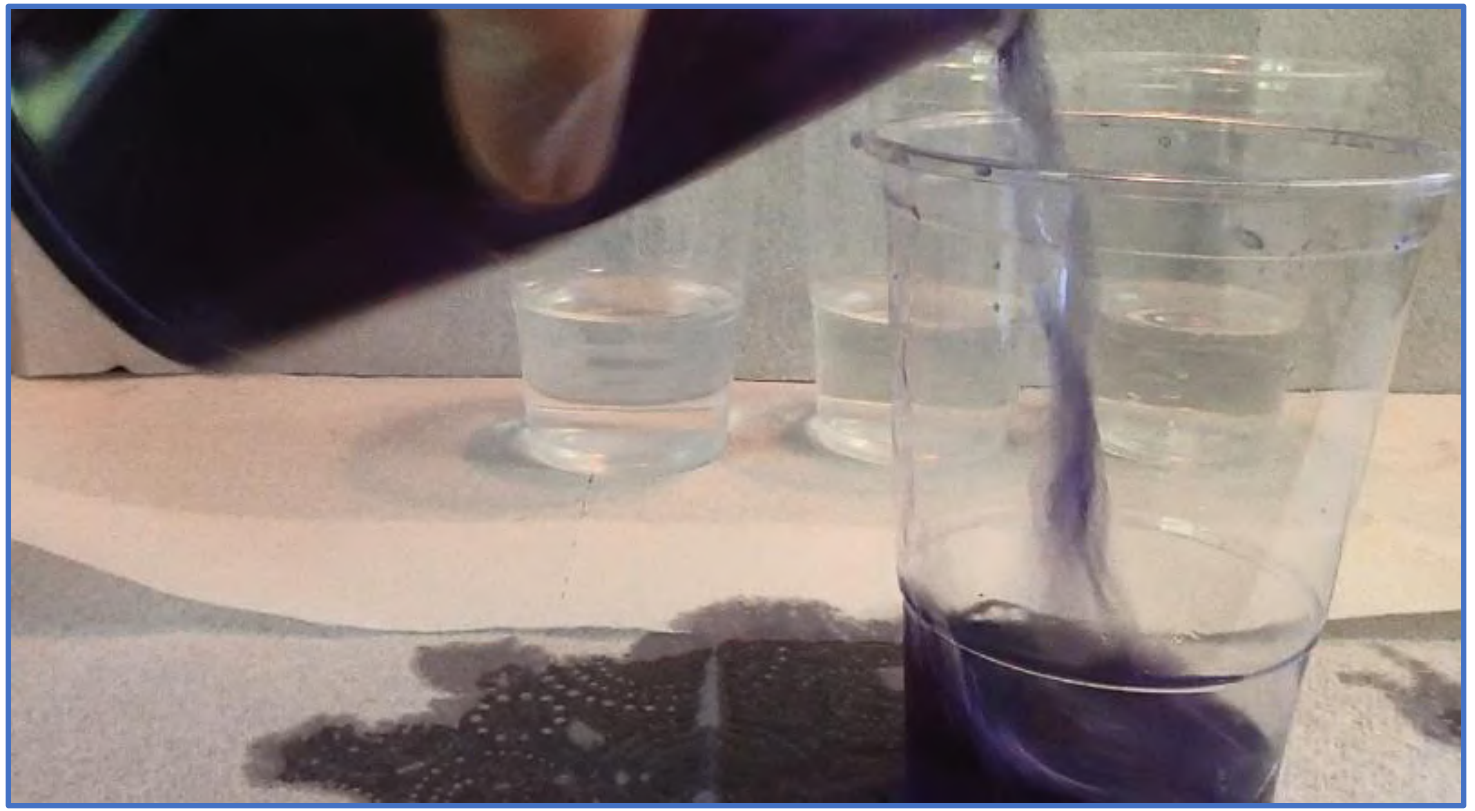
What did we do?

- Created Lego ‘learners’



What did we do?

- Filmed ‘kitchen sink’ experiments

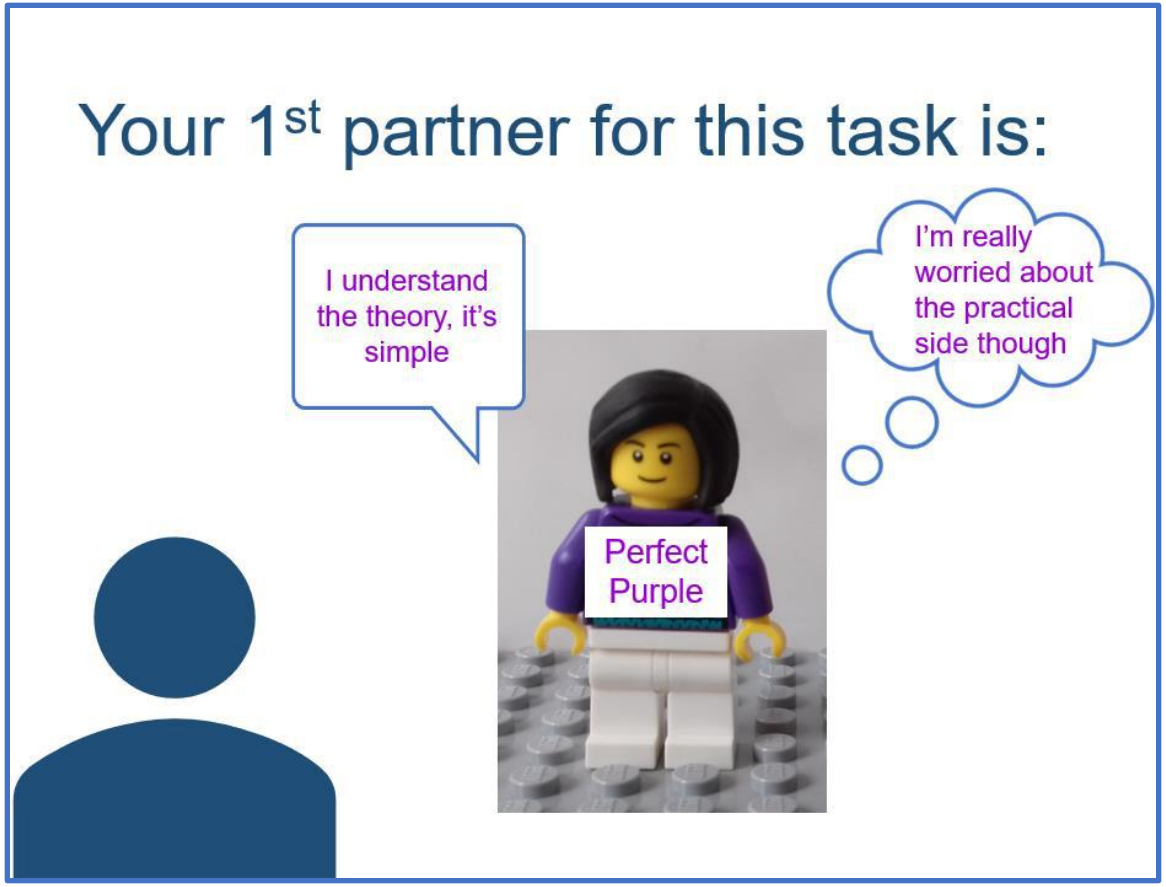


What did we do?

- Used thought and speech bubbles to convey different anxieties and perspectives

How it worked:

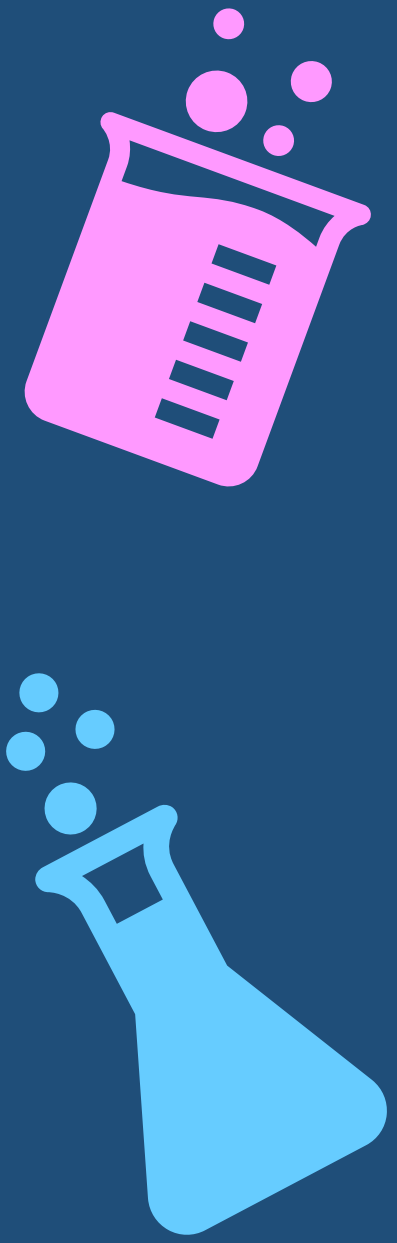
- The viewer ‘partnered’ each learner in turn – the video showed what happened in each assessment – then reflective prompts were given



Workshop aims:

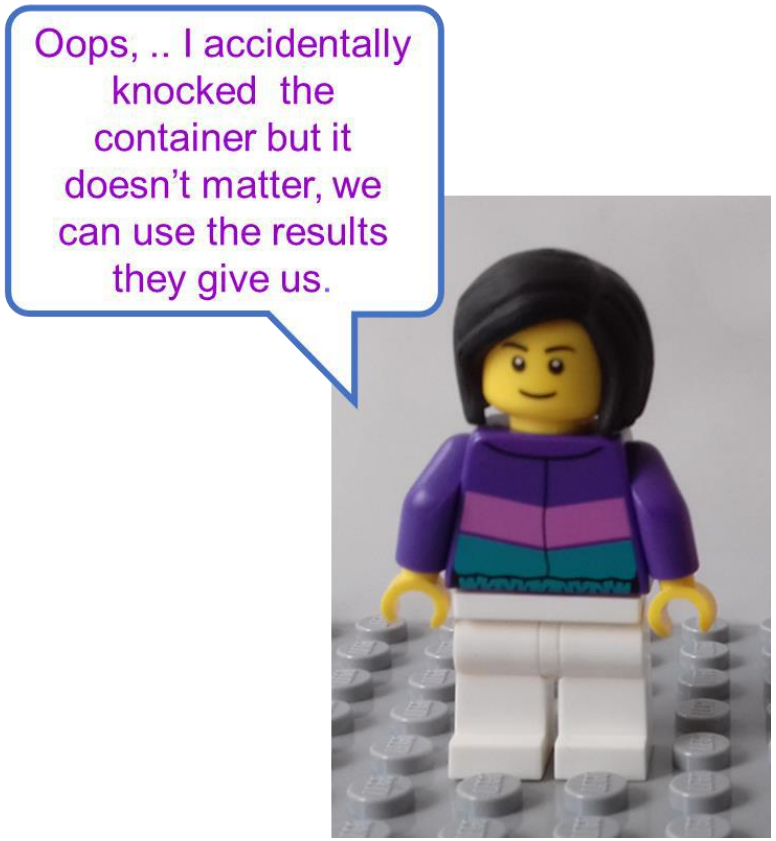
- Reduce anxiety through a playful approach:
- Slide design
- Use of Lego figures – objects with “playful affordances”
- Humorous voice-overs

“*playful* refers more to a mood of frolicsomeness, lightheartedness, and wit.” (Sutton-Smith 1997)



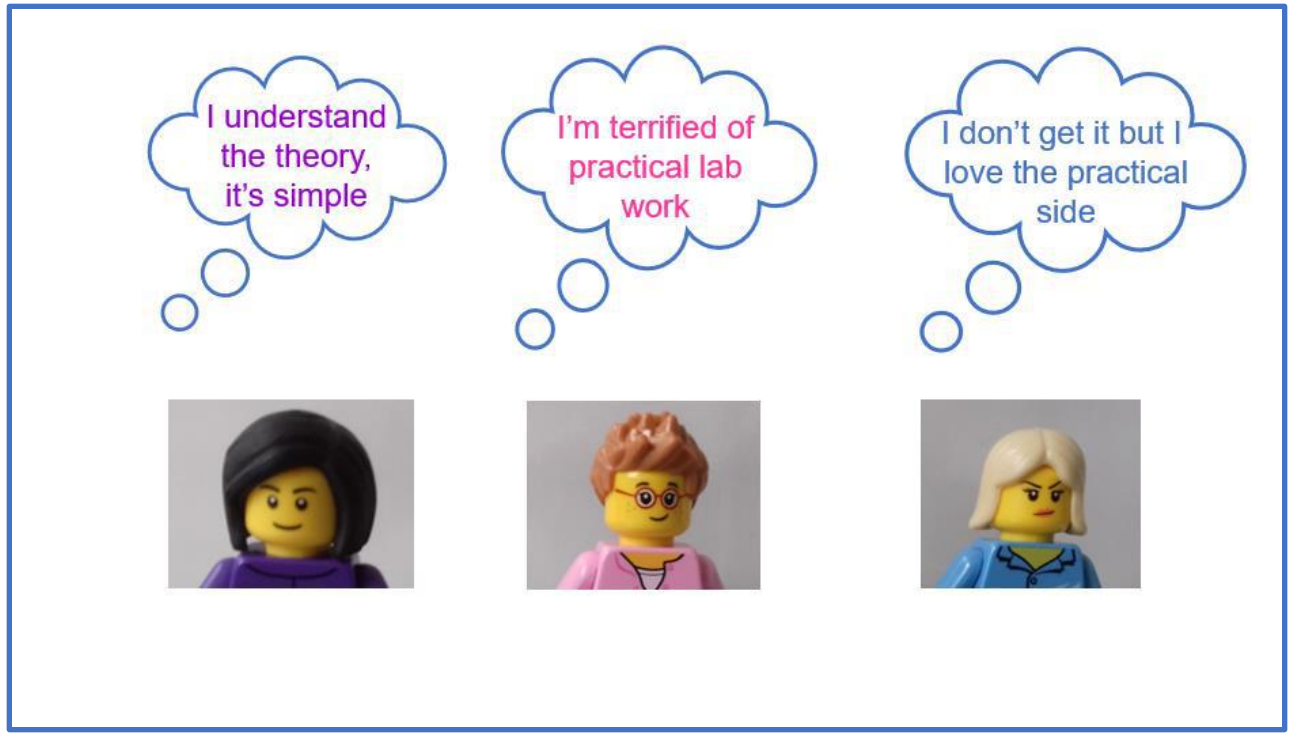
Workshop aims:

- Provide experience of ‘unsuccessful’ group assessments



Workshop aims:

- Foster empathy and compassion for other learners

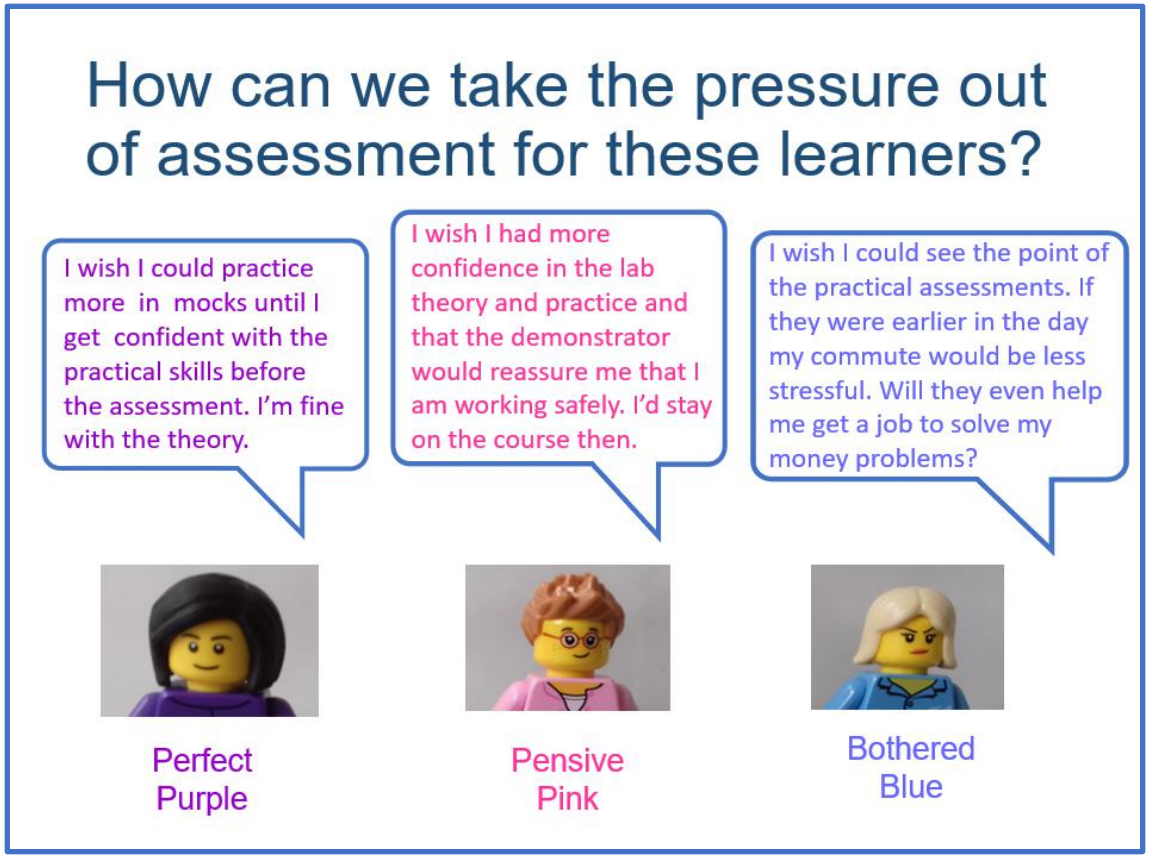


Workshop aims:

- Foster reflection on own assessment experiences

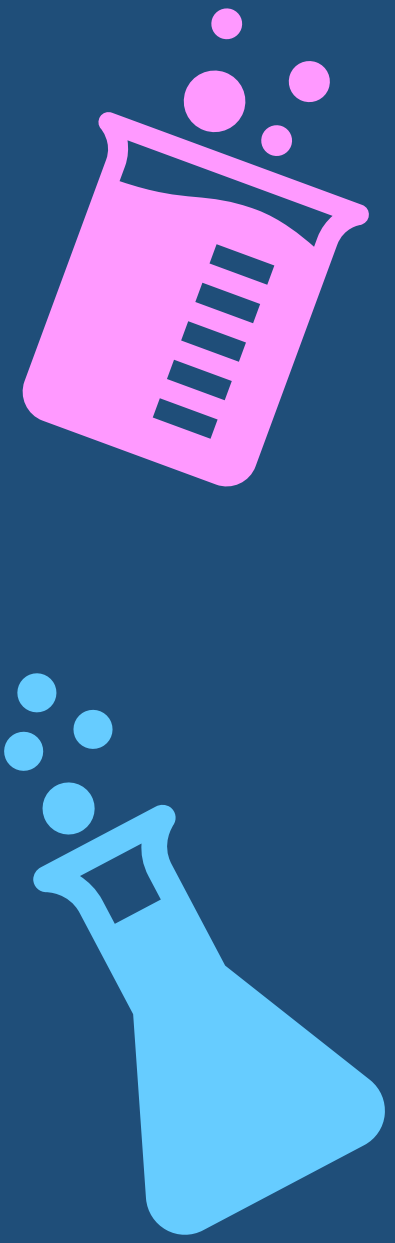
Workshop aims:

- Provoke consideration of alternative assessment strategies for diverse learners



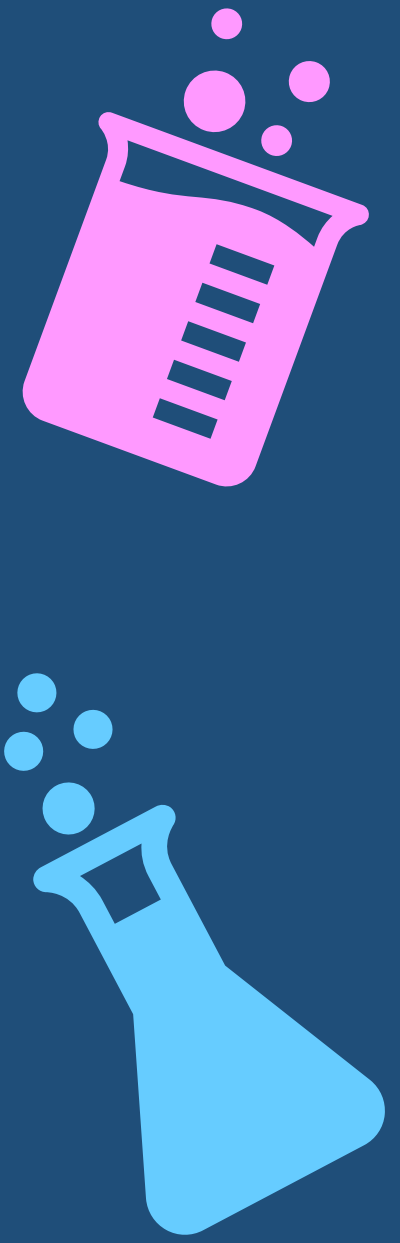
Key learning points

- Creative constraints prompted more innovative thinking
- The ‘digital pivot’ can help to overcome perfectionism
- It’s challenging to create the ‘human’ touch of a playful, face to face workshop in a pre-recorded session
- Premier Pro is really useful in piecing together a mix of video, audio and visuals – but exporting can be tricky!
- This is a ‘formula’ that is scalable – could be applied to various learner and subject contexts including identity work, UDL and Decolonising DMU
- As a team, we share a playful, inclusive ethos that has the wellbeing of learners at its heart

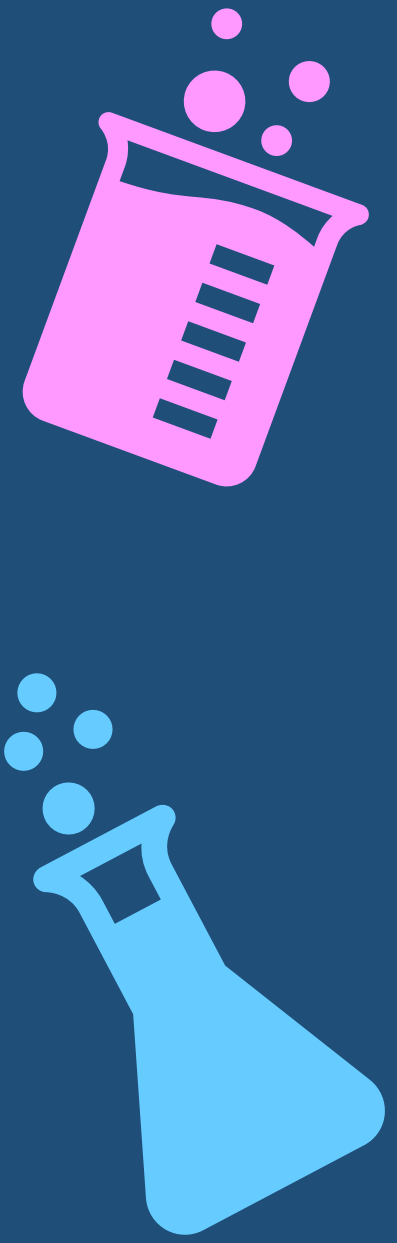


Final video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76fBZl8JDxE&feature=youtu.be



Questions?

Reading/References

- Amida, A., Chang, I. and Yearwood, D. (2019), Designing a practical lab-based assessment: a case study, *Journal of Engineering, Design and Technology,* 18:3, 567-581. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEDT-08-2019-0194
- Gibbs, P. (2017). Higher Education: A Compassion Business or Edifying Experience? In: Gibbs, P. (ed.) (2017). *The Pedagogy of Compassion at the Heart of Higher Education.* Springer: Switzerland.
- Hunt, L., Koenders, A. & Gynnild, V. (2012) Assessing practical laboratory skills in undergraduate molecular biology courses, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 37:7, 861-874. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2011.576313
- Reeve, J., O'Sullivan, A. & Nichols-Drew, L. (2019) *Workshop: Assessment – pick and mix or sour grapes? Inclusive Practice Network annual conference, University of Bath, 6th June 2019.* Available from: https://inclusioninhe.com/projects/inclusive-practice-network/annual-conference-2019/workshops/assessment-pick-and-mix-or-sour-grapes/ [Accessed 17/06/2020]
- Sinfield, S., Burns, T. & Abegglen, S. (2019).Exploration: Becoming Playful – The Power of a Ludic Module. In: James, A. & Nerantzi, C. (eds.) *The Power of Play in Higher Education*. Palgrave MacMillan: London, (pp23-31).
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1997). *The Ambiguity of Play*. Harvard University Press: USA.