



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

Co-Designing Assessment for Clarity in a Block-Teaching Module

A lived case study of student partnership

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Introduction and Context

- Assessment Co-Design Context
- Importance of Assessment Clarity
- Supported Innovation through CADI
- Narrative Approach of Presentation



The Problem

“The assessment brief is complex and difficult to analyse”



Why This Matters?

- Students guess expectations
- Confidence drops
- Performance affected
- Worse in block teaching



A photograph of three people in a collaborative meeting. A man with glasses and a blue patterned shirt is leaning over a desk, pointing at something. A woman with dark hair in a yellow top is looking at the same point. Another woman with blonde hair in a red top is in the background, looking on. The background is a bright, modern office space with colorful vertical panels.

The Opportunity

**CADI Collaborative
Growth Initiative**

Four Big Insights from Research

Co-design improves
assessment literacy

Students better
understand standards,
criteria, and
expectations.

Found across 51 studies
in Smith et al. (2025).

Negotiating rubric
wording increases
clarity & ownership

Meer & Chapman (2015)
showed co-creating
criteria bridges language
gaps and improves
shared understanding.

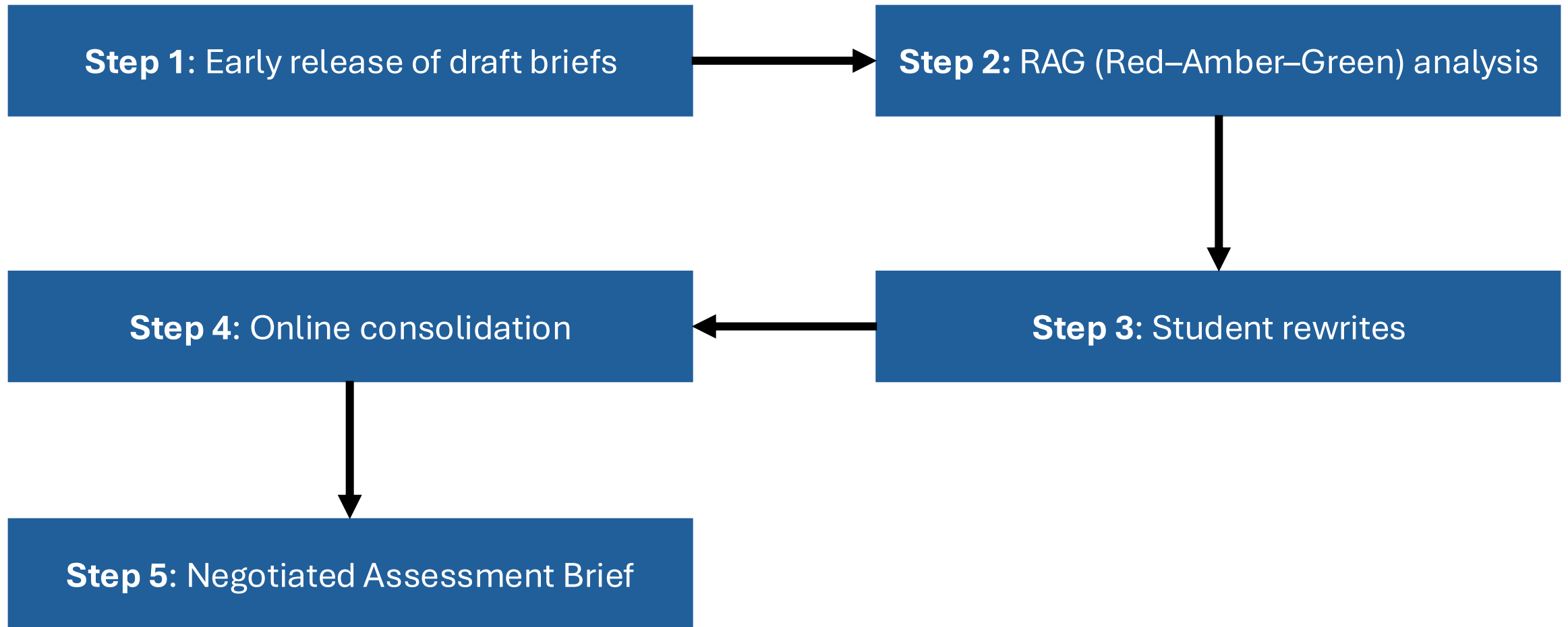
Students want
meaningful
conversations about
assessment

Bovill (2022) emphasises
co-creation as
partnership praxis.

Social constructivist
processes deepen
understanding

O'Donovan, Price & Rust
(2008) show that sense-
making happens through
dialogue and example,
not just written
articulation.

What I did?





Before and After: An Example



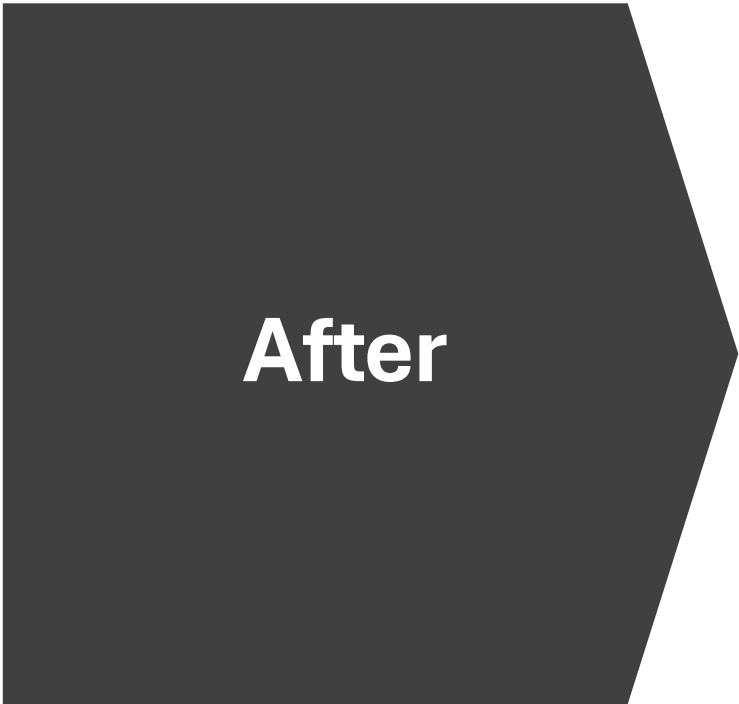
Before

Assessment

Description (short):

Technical terms
confusing

Modern manufacturing systems are complex, stochastic, and highly interconnected. Engineers must be able to model system behaviour, diagnose bottlenecks, and evaluate improvement strategies using numerical evidence. This assessment requires you to act as a manufacturing systems engineering team tasked with analysing and redesigning a production line using discrete-event simulation. The assessment mirrors professional practice by combining individual modelling competence and group-based system diagnosis and redesign, where collective reasoning strengthens decision-making.



After

Assessment	In this assessment, students will model a production line, find bottlenecks, and
Description (short):	test improvements using Enterprise Dynamics Simulation software. Each student will first build their individual models, then use their individual input to build the final group model.

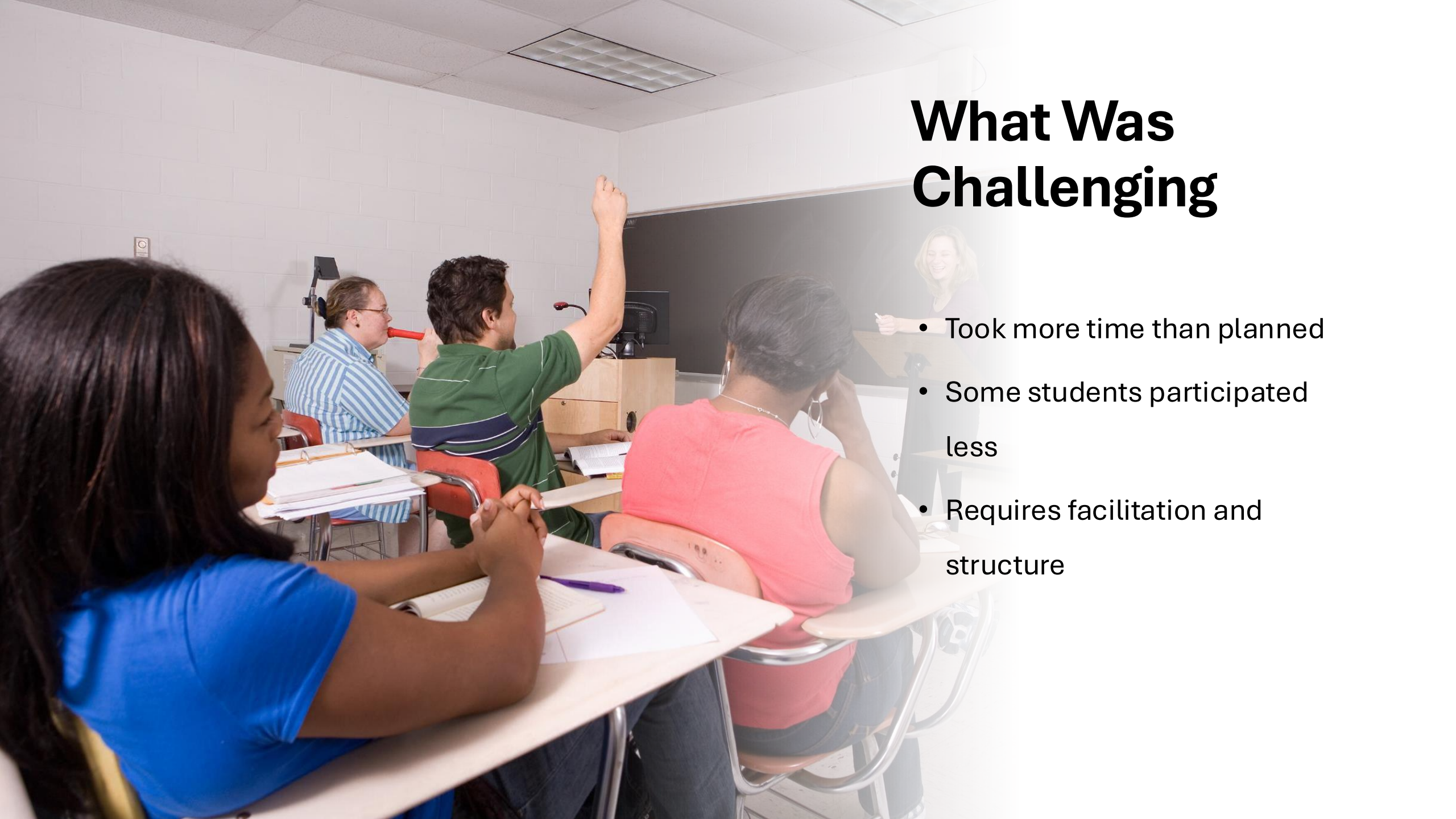
What Improved

- Clearer assessment language
- Better understanding of expectations
- Increased student confidence
- Reduced anxiety (especially early in block)



What Was Challenging

- Took more time than planned
- Some students participated less
- Requires facilitation and structure



Key Insight

- Purposeful Co-Design Strategy
- Avoiding Indiscriminate Use
- Enhancing Shared Understanding
- Transferable Learning Insight



Transferable Takeaways

- Start Small with Co-Design
- Co-Design as a Spectrum
- Dialogue Enables Clarity



“If students don’t understand assessment, clarity
isn’t something we deliver.
It’s something we co-create.”

Acknowledgement

Cathy Willatt

Thank you