



ARCHIVE PROJECT

Who EAP practitioners are in collaborative assessment: the eight collaborative assessment archetypes

Dr Peter Levrai: University of Turku, peter.levrai@utu.fi

ABSTRACT

Who we are impacts how we feel about collaborative assessments. For some of us, the thought of assessing students through a group assignment sends shivers down the spine. For others, it is something we would like to be able to do but there is uncertainty around how to do so fairly. This paper presents an archive project arising from a research study into the EAP practitioner and collaborative assessment. The main theoretical output of that study explains the dimensions of collaborative assessment identity. Teachers may have very different attitudes towards and expectations around student collaboration, which means they will favour different collaborative assessment approaches. A sub-finding of the study was the identification of eight collaborative assessment archetypes, ranging from those thoroughly set against collaborative assessment to those who are facilitating it as best they can. Understanding the diversity in teachers' stance toward collaborative assessment means we can better support them in developing their collaborative assessment literacy. Consequently, they will then be able to better guide and support students through a collaborative assignment, which can be a challenging but rewarding process. This paper outlines the eight collaborative archetypes and suggests avenues of future research and practice which could arise from them.

KEYWORDS:

teacher identity, assessment identity, collaborative assessment, Grounded Theory, teacher development



© Copyright: The Authors. This article is issued under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. This license enables reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator. The license allows for commercial use. **Peer review:** This article has been subject to a double peer review process

To cite this article:

Levrai, P. (2026). Who EAP practitioners are in collaborative assessment: the eight collaborative assessment archetypes. *BALEAP Journal of Research & Practice*, 2(1), 1 – 10. <https://doi.org/10.31273/baleapjrp.v2.n1.2089>

Introduction

This paper is presented as an archive project disseminating a theoretical sub-finding of a PhD study (Levrai, 2025a) into the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioner and collaborative assessment. The main theoretical output of the study explored the dimensions of collaborative assessment identity. Connected to identity, it was possible to identify eight collaborative assessment archetypes. When preparing an article on collaborative assessment identity (Levrai & García Mayo, 2026) it was not possible to include the archetypes due to word limit constraints. Since the archetypes present a potential avenue of future research, while also having practical implications for how we go about engaging with collaborative assignments and their assessment, they are presented here as an archive piece inviting further study.

Collaboration is a valued learning outcome in higher education (Mercer et al, 2019) although 'collaboration' as a term can be misunderstood (see Bolster & Levrai, 2022). In this paper a collaborative assignment is one in which students have co-ownership and joint responsibility for the whole work, which should be a unified, indivisible whole, meaning students cannot point to 'their' part (Storch, 2013). Through working together students can develop their teamwork skills and produce more sophisticated, higher quality work than they would be able to achieve working independently (Fernández Dobao & Blum, 2013; Storch, 2013). While there are affordances to collaboration, it problematises assessment since, ideally, the individual should be invisible in the final work. The assessment of a collaborative assignment is considered complex and is an area of tension for both students and teachers (Strijbos, 2016; Storch & Knoch, 2023). My research was prompted by the desire to find an effective and fair way to assess collaborative assignments, thereby enabling us to make more use of them and give more students access to the learning affordances of working with others.

While the success of a student collaboration depends on the group members, the practitioner has also been found to have a significant impact on the student experience (Kaendler et al., 2015). How a collaboration is set up and scaffolded can be a determining factor in how successful a student collaboration is and what students gain from the experience. However, practitioners are not always fully prepared to facilitate student collaboration effectively. Rather than being rooted in principled, theory-informed practice, our approach to collaboration is shaped by a mix of our own experience of collaboration as students and the trial-and-error of teaching collaboration (Bolster, 2025). This ad hoc approach arises as collaboration rarely features in teaching training courses or professional training sessions, meaning we rely on experience rather than on theory. Our expertise in facilitating collaboration could be improved through developing a Practitioner-led Pedagogy of Collaboration (PPoC) (Bolster, 2025) and, as a part of that, development of our collaborative assessment literacy would also be an aim. Collaborative assessment literacy encompasses what a teacher needs to know to design, administer and interpret the results of a collaborative assessment, an area in which we need more support (Meijer et al., 2020).

Group assignments and collaborative assessment can engender strong feelings. Prior to my PhD I was involved in a study exploring student attitude to group assignments (Levrai & Bolster, 2019). Over a series of semesters, changes in the framework supporting a group essay

assignment saw student approval of collaboration reach almost 90%. However, it seemed there was a minority of students that would be against the idea of groupwork, regardless of how it is facilitated (Levrai & Bolster, 2019). In a similar vein, there also seemed to be strong feelings about collaborative assignments amongst colleagues. When introducing a group essay assignment in an institution, it was met with a range of responses. Some teachers were fully supportive, others were unsure but curious and there were a minority of colleagues who were deeply sceptical of the approach. Concerns included fear of free-riders and of grade inflation, where lower performing students would get artificially higher scores through a group assignment. Such scepticism is not entirely unwarranted and serves to highlight that we, as practitioners, are approaching collaborative assessment with potentially very different attitudes and expectations. This matters because our beliefs and assessment literacies shape our practices (Brown, 2011) and, consequently, the student experience.

The origins of the archetypes

To better understand the EAP practitioner and their approaches and beliefs about collaborative assessment, I conducted a constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) (Charmaz, 2014; Hadley, 2017) study. The over-arching research question was “How can we, if we can, best assess collaborative assignments in EAP?”. It was not a context-bound study but one which drew on the experience and expertise of EAP practitioners working in different contexts. There were 20 participants in the interviews, with an average of 10-15 years' experience teaching EAP. It was a well-qualified cohort, with the majority holding MAs and a few holding PhDs, working in 15 different institutions across the UK, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

This study was carried out in adherence to the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research TENK. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study at the outset, participation was entirely voluntary, anonymity was guaranteed, and participants were free to withdraw at any time. Participants completed a pre-interview task, which was an online form asking them to evaluate different models of assessment for a collaborative assignment (see Levrai (2025b) for more details). This task was followed by an in-depth interview, which lasted an hour on average. The interview focused on their approaches to and beliefs around collaborative assessment and generated a rich data set.

Having a practical outcome was an important driver of the research and the hope was to determine an assessment approach that would enable us to assess collaborative assignments fairly. There was never an intention to discuss identity, but a GT study unfolds in the direction the data dictates. It became clear through early data analysis of open coding of the first round of interviews that the attitudes and beliefs of practitioners shaped their approach to collaborative assessment, with some being suspicious of them and others advocating in their favour. Consequently, it was necessary to understand where practitioners were coming from to develop an assessment approach that would be broadly applicable. One of the strengths of GT is that it is an iterative methodology, meaning each round of data collection is followed by analysis. This analysis then informs the next round of data collection, which enabled the refinement of the pre-interview task and interview protocol to focus on emergent concepts. Coding also shifted from open coding, through focused coding, to theoretical coding. In each of

these cycles, the codes were sorted and categorised, bringing concepts into focus. Coding was complemented with extensive diagramming, which was invaluable in visualising connections between concepts, leading to the main theoretical construct of the research: the dimensions of their collaborative assessment identity (Levrai & García Mayo, 2026).

Collaborative assessment identity is shaped by three key principles: simplicity, transparency and, most importantly, fairness. These principles then shape three guiding orientations. EAP practitioners are reward oriented, in that they want to ensure students get the results they deserve and also that students benefit from the assessments they do. They are also practically oriented, meaning they want assessment that is feasible and workable for both teachers and students. The strongest orientation is the defensibility orientation, which is shaped by environment, experience and expectation. It is essential that assessments can be clearly justified, and those assessments are designed and supported to encourage student learning and development. Part of assessment design is trying to anticipate and mitigate issues as well as encouraging behaviours that are most beneficial for student development and learning. Within the collaborative assessment identity of EAP practitioners, it was also possible to identify distinct collaborative assessment archetypes. These archetypes give us an understanding of attitudes practitioners hold when assessing collaborative assignments and are the focus of this archive piece.

Eight collaborative assessment archetypes

Early in the data analysis, it seemed possible to identify participants characterised by a driving attitude toward collaborative assignments. At that stage it was envisaged that EAP practitioners could be placed along a continuum from those who were diametrically opposed to collaborative assessment (the Never-everers) to those who embrace collaborative assessment and are fully confident in their ability to assess collaborative work (the All-seeing-eye). However, as the research continued, it became clear that the archetypes are not directly linear, with a teacher embodying the first, then the second, then the third. Consequently, it may be better to visualise a constellation of collaborative archetypes rather than a continuum. Practitioners may inhabit different archetypes at different times, or in relation to different assessments. We are not fixed in an archetype but can shift to another archetype, as experience and professional development have an impact.

Through subsequent rounds of data collection and analysis other archetypes were identified, resulting in the eight archetypes shown in Figure 1. In this paper, the archetypes refer specifically to practitioners' assessment stances in relation to collaborative assignments, even though these stances are informed by broader beliefs about collaborative learning. While there is not direct linear progression from one archetype to the next, they are illustrated reading clockwise from the top from more sceptical to most confident in the assessment of collaborative assignments. It must be noted the characterisation of the All-seeing-eye should be considered a theoretical possibility rather than an archetype embodied by a specific participant because no-one exhibited full confidence in their collaborative assessment practices. The Best-I-can-doer was also not encountered but is an aspiration of how we could be in collaborative

assessment, through a PPOC. The other archetypes, however, could be identified among the participants.

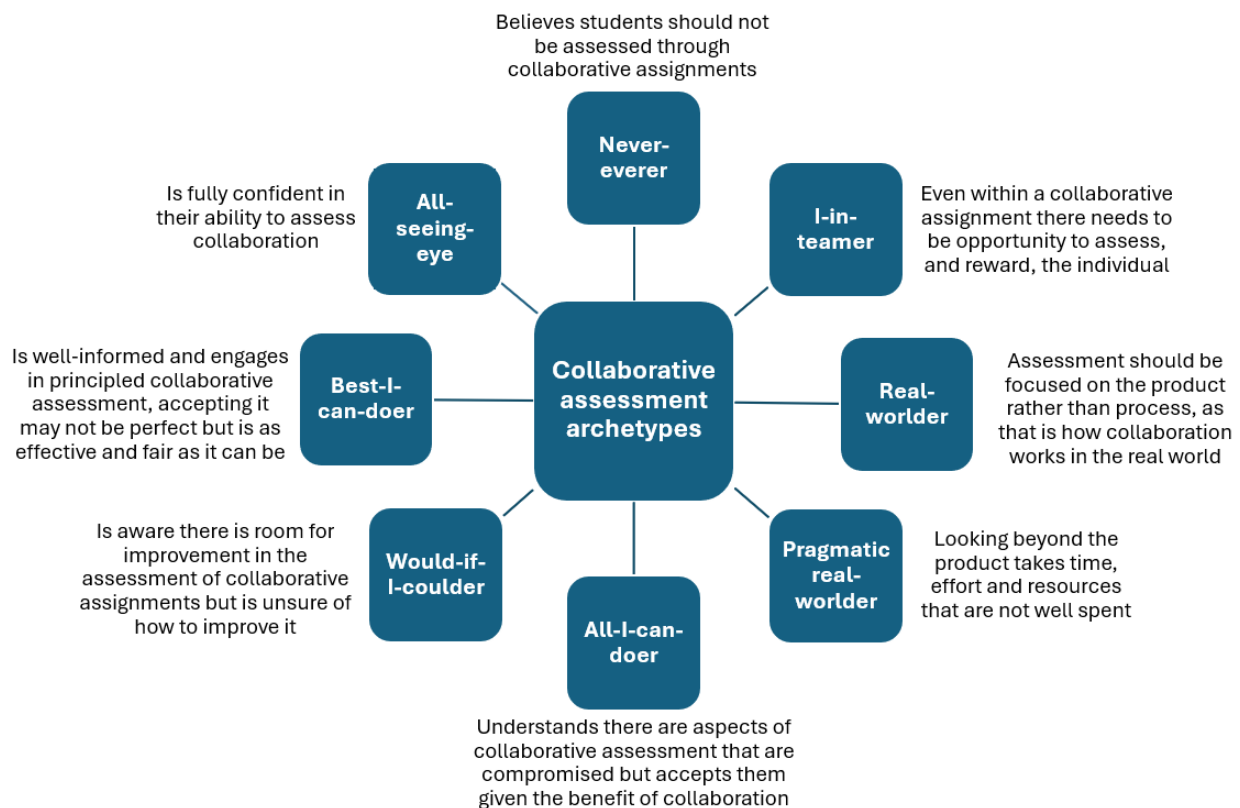


Figure 1: The constellation of collaborative assessment archetypes

Wendy (pseudonyms for participants will be used throughout) was the clearest illustration of a Never-everer, who advocates for collaboration and sees value in it, but rejects the notion that it can be a valid assessment. What is particularly interesting, and illustrative of how people may shift between archetypes, was that during the interview Wendy stood out as an I-in-teamer. The I-in-teamers value collaboration but what is paramount for them is that a student can be recognised and rewarded for the work they do, with the reward orientation coming to prominence. This means such practitioners will be looking for opportunities within collaborative assessments to differentiate and award individual grades. Further reflection, however, saw Wendy more fully inhabit the Never-everer archetype in further correspondence. In this move between archetypes, we can see two different guiding orientations in play. When discussing the pre-interview task, the practical orientation was dominant, problem solving and trying to determine the best way to use different assessment lenses. With time, however, the fairness orientation came to the fore, leading to the shift in archetype and the rejection of collaborative assessment. This illustrates how we are not fixed in an archetype but rather how we can move between archetypes and can inhabit aspects of different archetypes simultaneously.

Three participants, Van, Cristobal and Humberto, seem to illustrate the Real-worlder, who are more accepting of collaborative assignments than the Never-everer or I-in-teamer. Real-worlders, however, would be fully focused on the product to assess such assignments, rather than considering the collaborative process. This stems from two main arguments. The first is that, in the real work world, the quality of the final work is typically more important than how it was produced. This brings together the principles of simplicity and practicality. While the collaborative process may be lightly monitored in case of issues, when it comes to assessment, the product rules. The second argument, also driven by simplicity and practicality, is that a successful collaboration will result in a successful product. Consequently, there is no need to try to assess the process of the collaboration, since the quality of collaboration is already reflected in the final work.

Pragmatic real-worlders share a superficial sameness with Real-worlders, in that they too focus on the product for assessment purposes. However, the rationale differs, with practicality taking on a greater influence. Pragmatic real-worlders are aware that there likely needs to be more to the assessment of collaborative assignments than solely looking at the final product. However, they are wary of the time and effort it would take to look further into the process. While recognising solely assessing the product may not be ideal, it is all Pragmatic real-worlders can do and they could resist adopting different assessment strategies due to increased workload for both students and teachers.

As Pragmatic real-worlders accept logistical limits to collaborative assessment and maintain a product focus, so too do All-I-can-doers accept there may be flaws in their approach to assessing collaborative assignments. However, despite those flaws, they still advocate for and are supportive of collaborative assessment. This can be seen in the participant Fay recognising there may be unequal contribution in a collaboration but rationalising it through Pareto's Law (a minority of workers produce most of the work) and in Ava accepting that all she can do is set the standards and expectations of a collaborative assignment and hold to them. Although not perfect, the All-I-can-doer is at relative peace with the compromises necessary in a collaborative assignment. However, Fay's excitement at the idea of individual complementary assignments or assessing awareness of collaboration show how an All-I-can-doer can shift into another archetype: the Would-if-I-coulder. As they learn more, All-I-can-doers are open to change and improved assessment practices.

Most participants fell under the Would-if-I-coulder archetype. Within this archetype is awareness that there are opportunities to assess collaborative assignments more robustly but appreciation that there are barriers to doing so, be they limitations in time, institutional constraints, or lack of knowledge and ability. In this we can see the defensive orientation at play. This awareness speaks to Stiggins' (1995) concept that part of assessment literacy is knowing when there is something wrong with an assessment. However, it does not fully meet his expectation that, in addition to identifying an issue, the assessment literate know what to change to improve the assessment. While the Would-if-I-coulders know that they could develop and perhaps should improve their collaborative assessment practices, they lack the knowledge to do so, recalling Humberto's recognition that "if you can do it, then it's good. But I'm just not sure how you would do it" and Gonzalo's contention that "I think if you come up with a way to

assess collaboration effectively, you could make millions". This is not a critique of the participants. The literature also currently offers little in the way of solutions.

The All-seeing-eye is a theoretical archetype and was not encountered in this research. It is named after a quote from Bertha: "I don't like the idea of the teacher being this like, all seeing eye who can just swoop in at the end and then award some arbitrary mark when they weren't involved". The All-seeing-eye has full confidence in their ability to accurately and fairly assess a collaboration. Rather than that ideal, perhaps the best that can be hoped for, after practitioner collaboration and training, is the rise of the Best-I-can-doer, a well-informed practitioner actioning and assessing collaborative assignments in a principled, fully rationalised way. While the Best-I-can-doer archetype was also not directly encountered in this study, it does not seem unreasonably idealistic or ambitious. If we build a PPoC and develop the collaborative assessment literacy of our community, we will develop a more principled and consistent approach to assessing collaborative assignments.

The value in identifying such collaborative assessment archetypes is recognising that not every teacher is going to have the same initial response or be equally invested in making a success of a collaborative assignment. EAP practitioners may feel quite strongly about how such an assignment should be assessed, if it should be assessed at all.

Wendy may not be alone in thinking "I see the value of [collaborative assignments] but as a form of assessment, I think they're a bit of a cop out". On a teaching team you might have an I-in-teamer who wants a strong individual assessment lens, a Real-worlder who does not want to go beyond product-assessment and a Would-if-I-coulder who believes the quality of the collaboration should be assessed in a collaborative assignment. If this is not recognised, and if the proposed assessment scheme is not rationalised to address the various concerns, there could be considerable resistance to introducing a collaborative assignment. That resistance could have negative washback on the teacher and student experience, triggering a vicious cycle of negative experience hardening negative attitudes toward collaborative assignments.

Conclusion

Assessment is an area of tension in collaborative assignments but if we were able to assess collaborative assignments with more confidence and consistency, we would be able to better leverage the potential learning gains of such assignments. The teacher plays a central role in assessment and who they are informs their belief and practices. Through identifying collaborative assessment archetypes, avenues for future research and ways of improving practice open up. Such avenues may include:

- Who we are in collaborative assessment could be further explored, potentially leading to the identification of further archetypes. For example, some participants engaged in sweat assessment (valuing the effort students made). Could the Weigh-the-efforter exist?
- A diagnostic tool could be developed, to help teachers understand where they stand in relation to collaborative assessment and which archetype(s) they inhabit. Developing a

better understanding of our beliefs and attitudes toward the assessment of collaborative assignments is the first step in the development of principled assessment practices.

- Collaborative archetypes could aid in the design of training tailored to a particular archetype to address their specific needs and concerns.
- This then creates the research opportunity of seeing how teacher training and professional development may shift collaborative archetypes.

The ultimate aim would be to discover how we can best, as a community, move toward becoming Best-I-can-doers and effectively support students through collaborative assignments while also assessing those assignments fairly. Collaboration matters. The student experience of collaboration matters. The assessment of it matters. Teachers matter. Who those teachers are and how they are supported and empowered to do their jobs as well as they can really matters.

References

- Bolster, A. (2025). *A qualitative Grounded Theory study of EAP practitioners and collaborative learning: Identity and beliefs*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The University of the Basque Country
- Bolster, A., & Levrai, P. (2022). Are we talking about the same thing? Researcher and practitioner perspectives of student collaboration. In Evans, M., Bond B., & Ding, A. (Eds.), *Innovation, Exploration and Transformation—Proceedings of the 2019 BALEAP Conference* (pp. 96-104). Garnet Education.
- Brown, G. (2011). Teachers' conceptions of assessment: Comparing primary and secondary teachers in New Zealand. *Assessment Matters*, 3, 45-70.
<https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.515755939850862>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory (2nd ed.)*. Sage Publications.
- Fernández Dobao, A., & Blum, A. (2013). Collaborative writing in pairs and small groups: Learners' attitudes and perceptions. *System*, 41(2), 365-378.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.02.002>
- Hadley, G. (2017). *Grounded theory in applied linguistics research: A practical guide*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315758671>
- Kaendler, C., Wiedmann, M., Rummel, N., & Spada, H. (2015). Teacher competencies for the implementation of collaborative learning in the classroom: A framework and research review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 27(3), 505-536. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-014-9288-9>

Levrai, P. BALEAP Journal of Research and Practice, 2026, 1-10.

Levrai, P. (2025a). *Exploring Practitioner Collaborative Assessment Identity to Develop a Principled Multi-Lens Approach to Assessing Collaborative Assignments In English For Academic Purposes*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Basque Country]. UPV/EHU Archivo Digital para la Docencia y la Investigación. <http://hdl.handle.net/10810/76320>

Levrai, P. (2025b). What to assess when assessing collaborative assignments: the practitioner perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 1-18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2025.2571219>

Levrai, P., & García Mayo, M. P. (2026). Understanding the collaborative assessment identity of English for Academic Purposes practitioners. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. 79. 101621. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2025.101621>

Levrai, P., & Bolster, A. (2019). A framework to support group essay writing in English for Academic Purposes: A case study from an English-medium instruction context. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 44(2), 186-202.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1487024>

Meijer, H., Hoekstra, R., Brouwer, J., & Strijbos, J. W. (2020). Unfolding collaborative learning assessment literacy: A reflection on current assessment methods in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(8), 1222-1240.

Mercer, S., Hockly, N., Stobart, G. & Lorenzo Galés, N. (2019). *Global Skills: Creating empowered 21st Century Learners*. Oxford University Press. <https://elt.oup.com/feature/global/expert/global-skills?cc=fi&selLanguage=en>

Storch, N. (2013). Collaborative writing in L2 classrooms. *Multilingual Matters*.
<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847699954>

Storch, N., & Knoch, U. (2023). Assessing collaborative writing: current challenges and future possibilities. In Li, M. & Zhang, M. (Eds.), *L2 Collaborative Writing in Diverse Learning Contexts* (pp. 229-247). John Benjamins.

Stiggins, R. (1995). Assessment literacy for the 21st century. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77(3), 238–245.

Strijbos, J. (2016). Assessment of Collaborative Learning. In G. T. L. Brown, & L. R. Harris (Eds.), *Handbook of Social and Human Conditions in Assessment* (pp. 302-318). Routledge.