

Enhancing Consistency of Assessor Judgements: Understanding Socio-Cultural Influences in Clinical Assessment

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Session outline

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Describe key socio-cultural factors that influence examiner judgement in clinical examinations
- Recognise how their own beliefs, expectations and practices shape assessment decisions
- Identify practical strategies to support more consistent, fair and defensible judgements in their own contexts

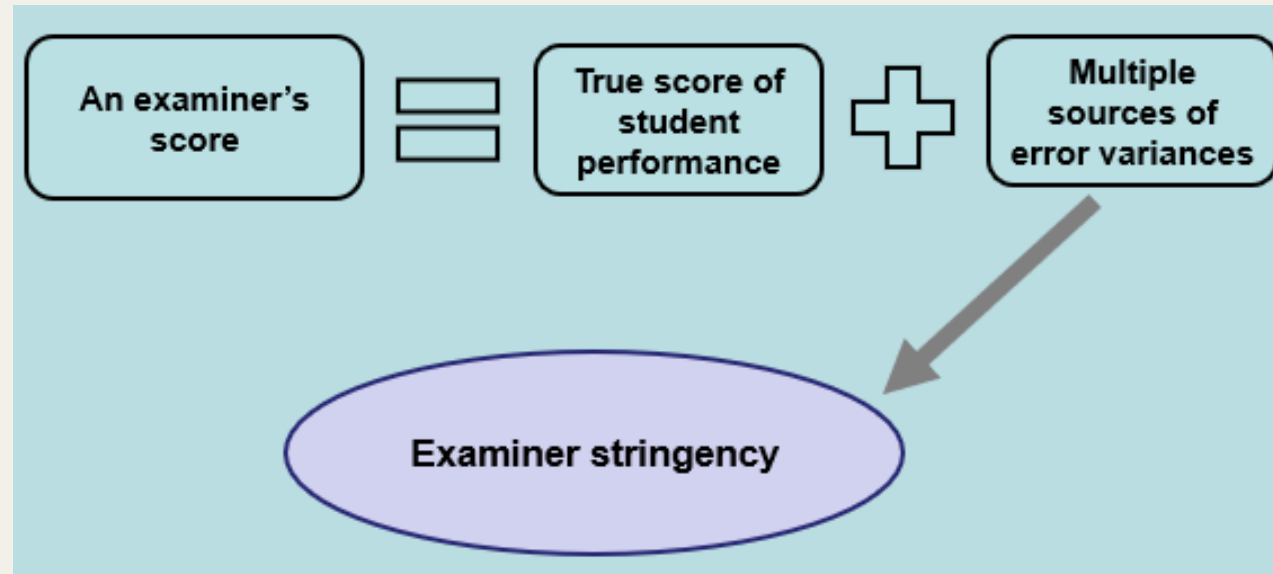
Challenges in making judgements (Sadler, 2014)

- Different interpretations of the standardised marking criteria or standards
- Lack of shared understanding of the given criteria and their implication for practice
- Apply their own concepts or additional criteria to make judgements



Beyond psychometrics

Generalisability Theory (Brennan, 2010; Cronbach et al., 1972)



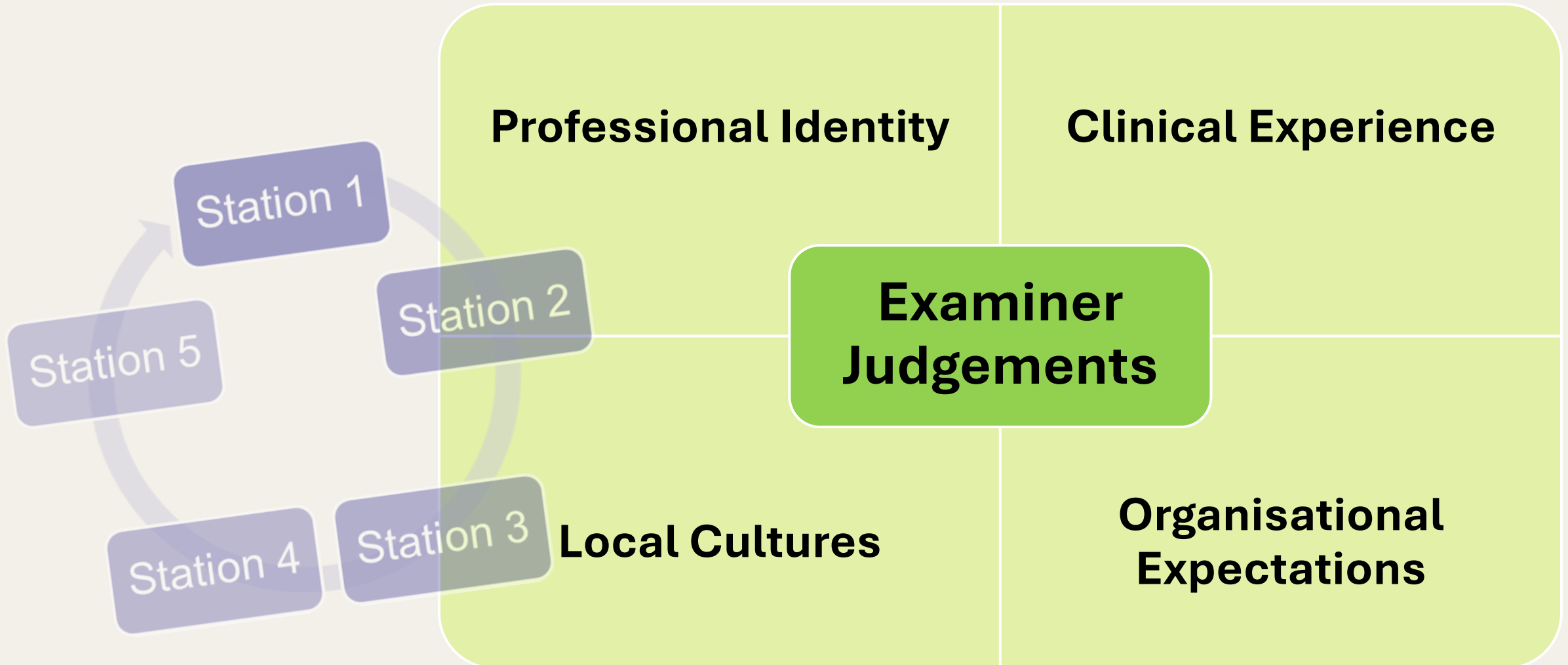
How do we eliminate subjectivity?



How do we understand and work with subjectivity?

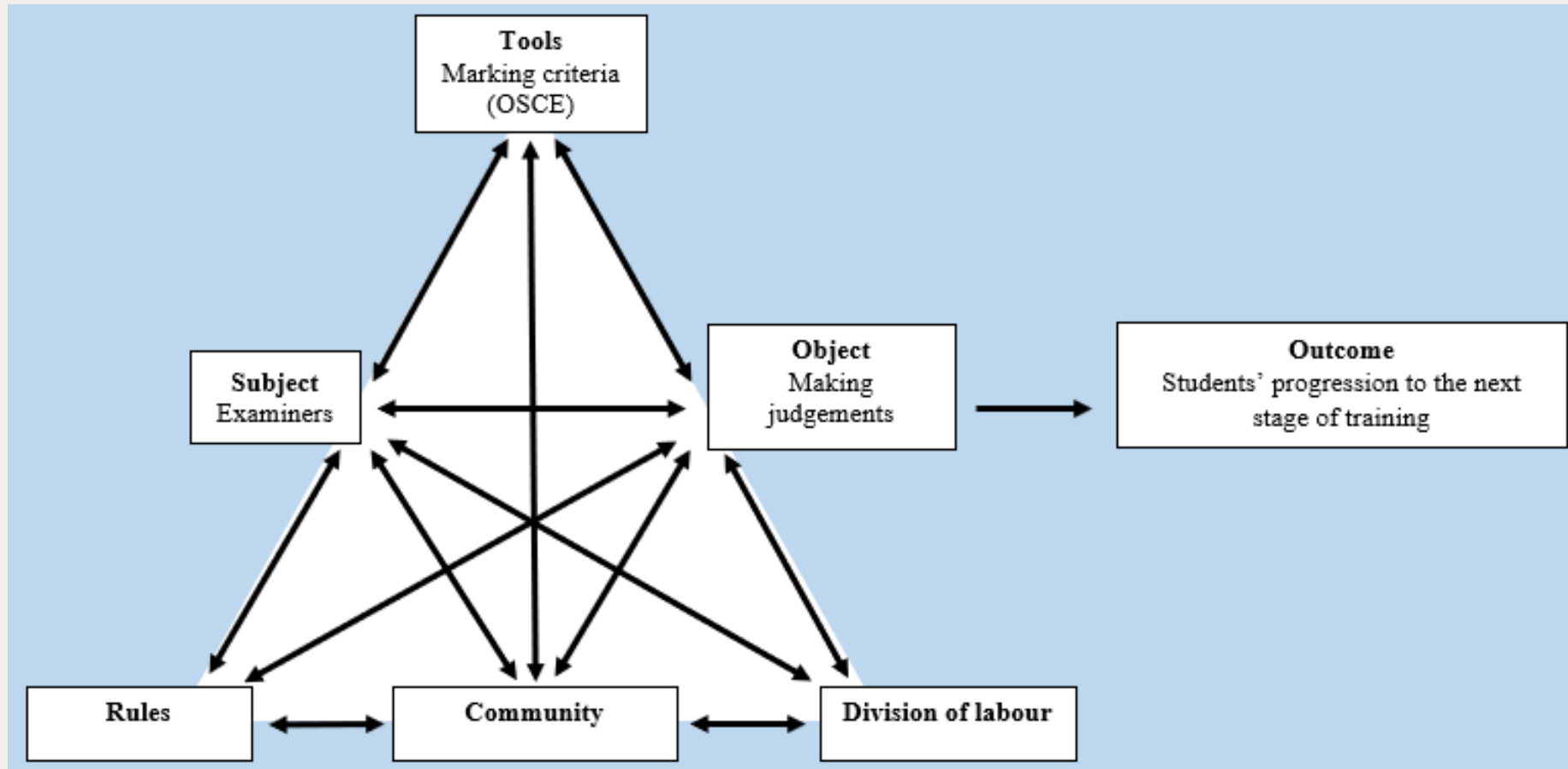
Examiner judgement as situated practice

(Gormley et al., 2021; Ten Cate & Regehr, 2019; Yeates et al., 2013)



Cultural Historical Activity Theory

(Engeström, 2001, 2004, 2014)



The above figure was adapted from Engeström (2014).

Using CHAT to reflect on... (Wong et al., 2022)

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Using cultural historical activity theory to reflect on the sociocultural complexities in OSCE examiners' judgements

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Abstract

Examiners' judgements play a critical role in competency-based assessments such as objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs). The standardised nature of OSCEs and their alignment with regulatory accountability assure their wide use as high-stakes assessment in medical education. Research into examiner behaviours has predominantly explored the desirable psychometric characteristics of OSCEs, or investigated examiners' judgements from a cognitive rather than a sociocultural perspective. This study applies cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to address this gap in exploring examiners' judgements in a high-stakes OSCE. Based on the idea that OSCE examiners' judgements are socially constructed and mediated by their clinical roles, the objective was to explore the sociocultural



Breakout discussion (15 minutes)

Part 1 – Reflecting on socio-cultural influences (reflection)

Thinking about your own context

- What socio-cultural factors most strongly influence how examiner judgements are made?
- Where do you see tensions between rules, expectations and clinical judgement?

Part 2 – Moving towards more fairer and defensible practice (application)

Now, using those reflections

- What currently helps judgements to be fair and defensible in your context?
- What is one realistic strategy that could better support shared understanding or calibration of examiner judgement?
- How about providing feedback to examiners on their judgement behaviour?

What will work well for this approach? What are some of the considerations?



From understanding to practical action...

For individual examiners

- Support assessment literacy and reflection
- Using feedback to prompt reflection

For organisations

- Clarify the purpose of clinical assessment
- Co-design marking criteria and training with examiners

For examiner groups

- Use structured feedback on assessment practice as professional dialogues with colleagues
- Create communities of practice

Please email me at amy.wong@uea.ac.uk if you are interested in being part of a Community of Practice to share experiences and support assessment practice.

Take-home messages

- 1. Make the purpose of the assessment explicit**
- 2. Create space to talk about judgement, not just scores**
- 3. Focus on defensibility, not agreement**
- 4. Support assessment literacy through ongoing dialogue**
- 5. Emotions are part of assessment decision-making**

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Thank you & Evaluation



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