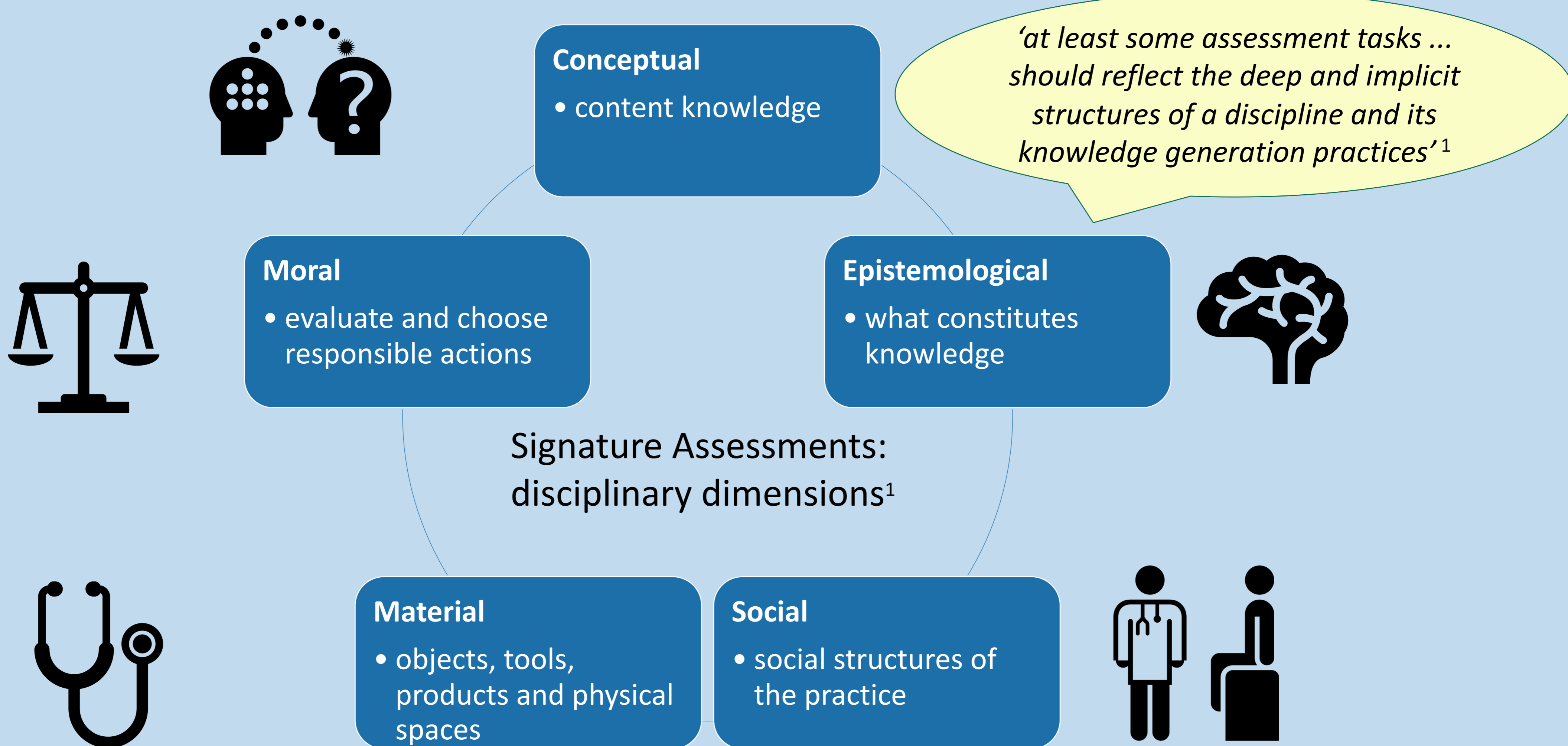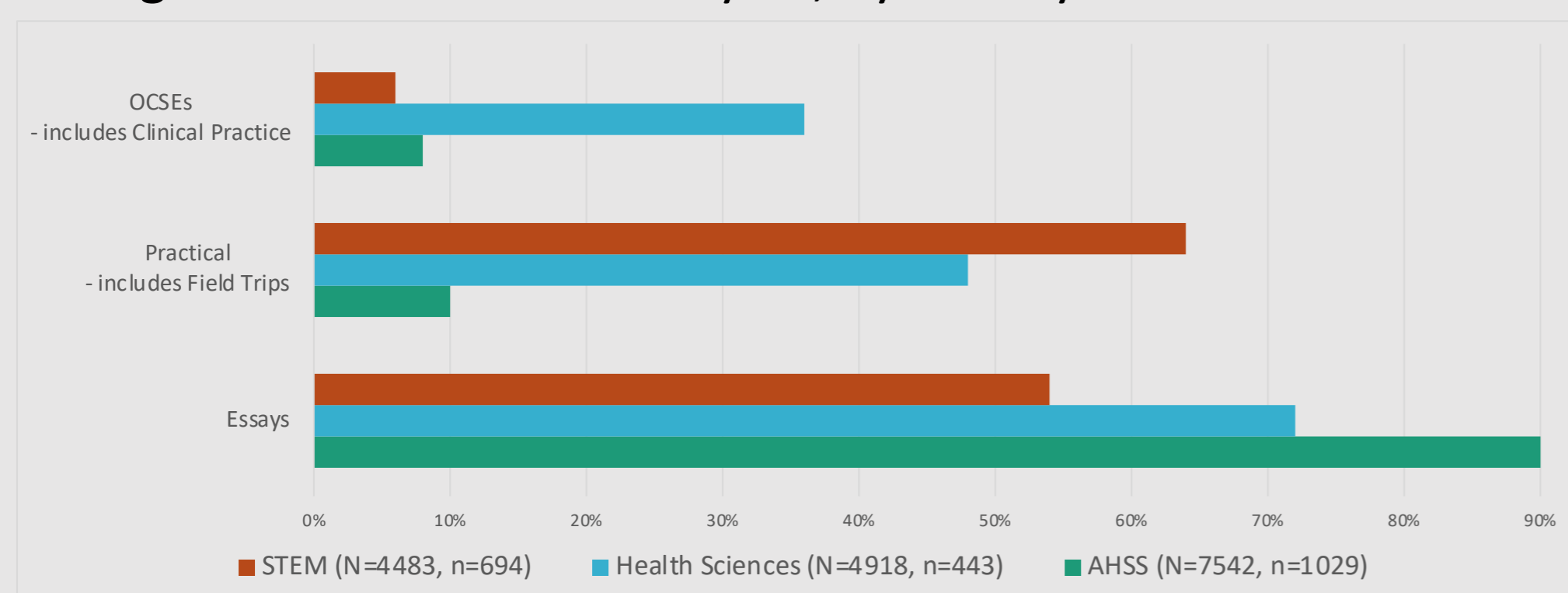# Signature Assessments in the Disciplines

Caitríona Ní Shé, Pauline Rooney, Nicola Byrne, Jonny Johnston, Jade Concannon, & Cicely Roche. Trinity College Dublin,

Conceptual
- content knowledge

'at least some assessment tasks ... should reflect the deep and implicit structures of a discipline and its knowledge generation practices' [1]

Moral
- evaluate and choose responsible actions

Epistemological
- what constitutes knowledge

Signature Assessments: disciplinary dimensions[1]

Material
- objects, tools, products and physical spaces

Social
- social structures of the practice

Assessment practices in Trinity Faculties & Schools

Teaching, Learning and Assessment survey 2020/2021[2] – Incidence of online assessments experienced by students during the 2020-21 academic year, by Faculty

Chart categories: OCSEs - includes Clinical Practice; Practical - includes Field Trips; Essays. Axis 0% to 90%.
Legend: STEM (N=4483, n=694); Health Sciences (N=4918, n=443); AHSS (N=7542, n=1029)

Focus Group Interviews
Summer 2021
AHSS – 8 staff, 5 schools
STEM – 9 staff, 3 schools
Health Sciences – 5 staff, 5 schools

- Assessments that worked during the pandemic

Academics from **all three faculties** used online **Multiple-Choice Questions** (MCQ) to test students' **content knowledge**.

AHSS referred to **essays** as an **authentic** means to examine students.

Health Sciences disciplines, such as physiotherapy, asked students to record their **clinical practice**.
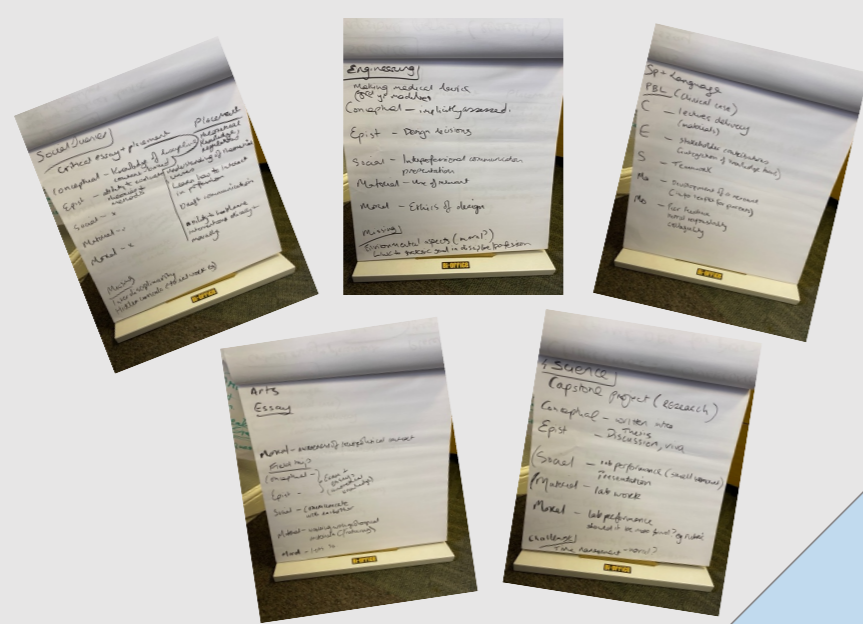
Gathering data

Spotlight Series Spring 2022[3]
Academic staff presented the challenges and opportunities for digital assessments (Essays, Field Trips, Clinical Practice) in their discipline.

Assessment & Feedback Autumn 2022[4]
(module for academic teaching staff)
- Five disciplines covered

Using the taxonomy - an example

Dimensions ------------------ Assessments	Conceptual	Epistemological	Social	Material	Moral
Engineering *making a medical device*	Implicitly Assessed	Design Decisions	Inter professional communication & presentations	Use of relevant tools	Ethics of Design

Balance of dimensions and areas lacking assessment as identified by academic staff in the discipline

- **Conceptual (?)**
- **Environmental aspects (moral?)**
- **Link to strategic goal of the profession**

Impact
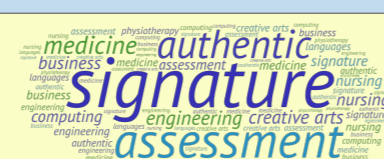
Reviewing assessment through the lens of the signature assessment taxonomy can highlight assessment balance (or lack thereof) across the five dimensions of disciplinarity.
This will facilitate in the design of assessment authentic to the discipline, signature assessments that allow students to generate

'a product about which one can make inferences about their expertise in that discipline [1,p 194].

Background & References

Trinity College Dublin has 24 disciplinary schools organised into three faculties: Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (AHSS); Science, Technology Engineering & Mathematics (STEM); and Health Sciences (HS). In the academic year of 2020/2021 there were 18871 students registered and 948 academic staff involved in teaching. (https://www.tcd.ie/)

1. Pitt, E. and Quinlan, K.M. Signature assessment and feedback practices in the disciplines, Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice. 2021;28(2), 97-100. DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2021.1930444

2. Academic Practice, Trinity Teaching & Learning Student [internal report]. Student & Staff Experiences of Teaching, Learning & Assessment at Trinity College Dublin 2020-21 Institutional access from https://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/reports/tla-survey.php

3. Trinity College Dublin [internet]. Academic Practice: Spotlight on Digital Assessment 2021-22; [three screens]. Available from https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/professional-development/spotlight_series/index.php

4. Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching and Learning & assessment [internet]. Academic Practice: Professional Development https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/professional-development/special-certificate/

All images were sourced in either PowerPoint, the Noun Project (https://thenounproject.com/) or Free SVG (https://freesvg.org/)