

Final Year Projects: Maximising the Learning

Alternative projects: Ten tests for validity

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Undergraduate projects. Why?

Key Goals – engaging students with research

- Intellectual development
- Edge of confident knowledge
- Ownership
- Skill development



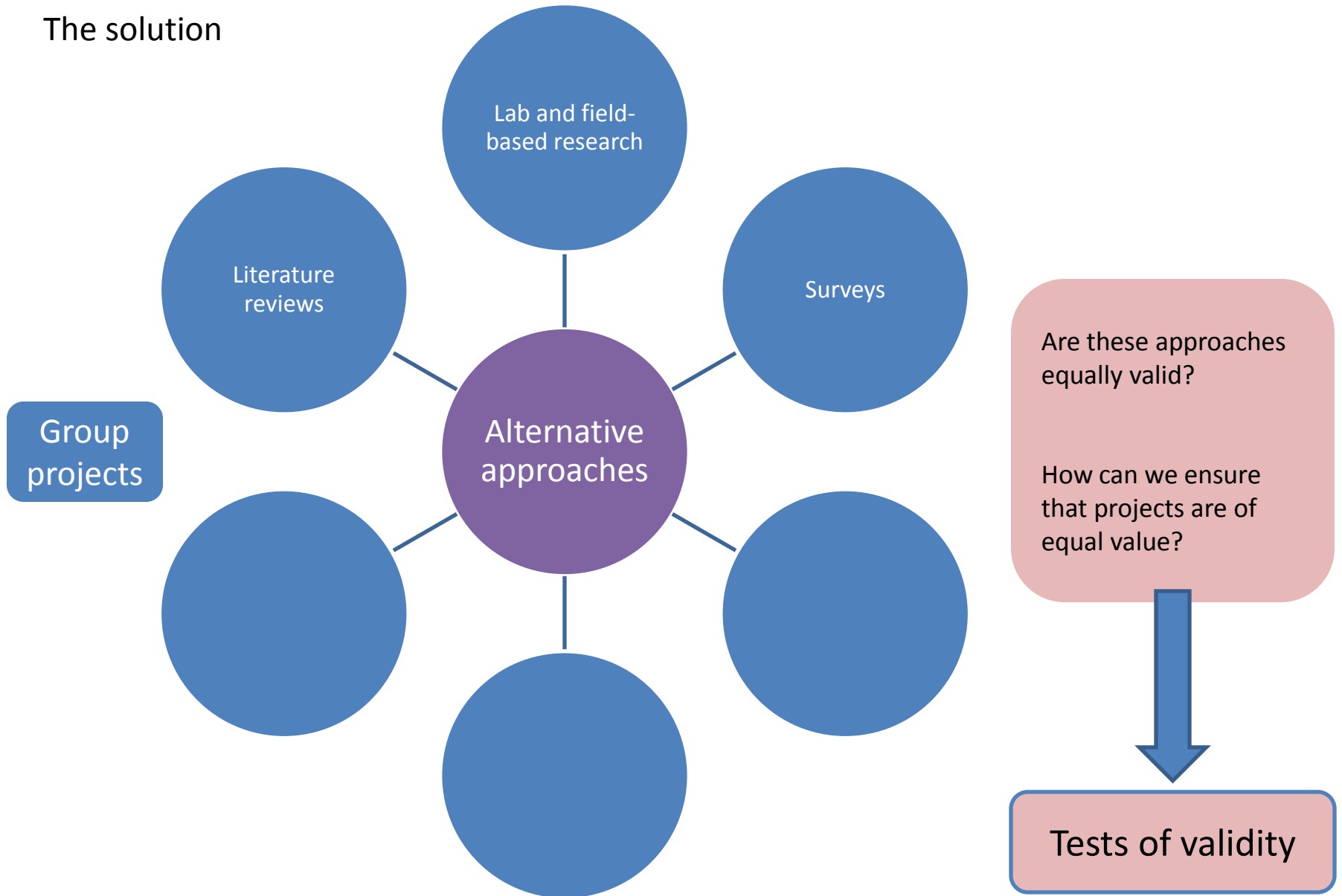
QAA Benchmark
requirements

The challenge

Pressures on project provision

- Increasing class sizes
- Limited resources
- Complex degree structures
- Subject complexity
- Pressures on academic time

The solution



Assumptions

- Project is obligatory, with designated time
- Academic staff are enthusiastic and committed
- Project will deliver:
 - Subject-specific skills
 - Generic/transferable skills

Tests of validity

Ten criteria of validity for undergraduate research projects

Research criteria	Educational criteria

Tests of validity

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real research	

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<i>“Is it a legitimate investigative experience?”</i>	<i>“Is it a legitimate part of a degree programme?”</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intrinsic educational validity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scientifically creative; application of scientific method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Controlled intellectual risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear target; defined objectives; envisaged outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not externally contingent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structured investigative programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessable on process, not content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for student enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cohort comparability

Final thought...

What do we tell the students?

Students need:

- **Confidence** in project, supervisor and system
- A clear understanding of **excellence**, independent of project type



Discuss criteria openly
Use them in course literature
Maintain a dialogue
Help students to appraise project options



"2 + 2 = 5"