It was with great pleasure that I read the volume on Mapping University Mathematics Assessment Practices by Paola Iannone and Adrian Simpson. The volume examines the current state of assessment in mathematics undergraduate degrees. It is presented in three parts: Part I, Patterns of Current Assessment Practice consisting of two chapters, one a survey on current assessment practice; the second, a review of the literature in undergraduate mathematics. Part II contain fourteen ‘opportunistically collected’ short 2-3 page articles on case studies of alternative assessment methods from departments around the UK, while Part III contains seven slightly longer articles on assessment projects, again from a selection of departments who were funded to undertake this element of the study.

In their foreword to the volume, the editors open with a discussion of the outcomes of the 2011 summit on aspects of the future of mathematics education in England and Wales which included concerns about students’ perception of their degrees, extent of subject knowledge, technical fluency and essential graduate skills. This comes at a time of increasing pressure from university management to deliver a more efficient and more relevant programme with the ill-defined ‘skills’ needed for the workforce. Increasingly it is felt the universities are market-driven with employability to the fore, driving student learning. However, to the contrary, it still appears that the ‘locus of control’ seems to be well-grounded in the department and with changes coming from committed individuals working in the generally supportive environment of the department.

Given this environment this volume provides a valuable broad overview of current practice in a selected group of institutions giving the reader the opportunity to gain new insight into summative assessment methods, with both the pros and cons discussed in many cases. Examples are mainly directed at the key first year of the undergraduate programme but several are directed at the third (B.Sc) and for fourth years (M.Sci/M.Math).

It is interesting to observe that many of the articles form the view that the ‘gold standard’ of the final written examination is very much regarded as the norm, striking the appropriate balance between efficiency, validity and fairness, with any attempts at change often resisted by both academic staff and students alike. However this volume provides discussion of alternative approaches such as projects, novel presentation of material, coursework and online quizzes as well as further novel approaches which will most likely be exploited to a greater extent in the future.

It is valuable volumes such as this MU-MAP volume from leaders in the field that provide greater insight and reflection of important developments with current assessment practices in a range of mathematics departments in the UK.