

Assessment for Learning Design Principles

The principle of ‘Embracing assessment for learning’ was agreed by Senate as an underlying aim of Curriculum Transformation. It is important to recognise that assessment motivates and develops individual knowledge and skills as well as validating student achievement and is a key pathway to feedback. Planning, designing and implementing assessment and feedback strategically can ensure that it supports the achievement of unit and course learning outcomes whilst also being a developmental and satisfying experience for students and staff.

The following principles for the design of assessment and feedback add further definition to this aim and are intended to assist course teams in developing assessment for their courses. They are fully aligned with the information provided in [QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback](#), but also build on, and reinforce, other key curriculum principles such as ‘Articulating a course-wide approach to learning’ and ‘Supporting the needs of all learners’ which are vital for high quality, sustainable course design and delivery. Whilst the principles are provided as a guide for developing assessment strategies for transformed courses, they can equally be applied to the current version of courses to enhance assessment and feedback where required. The principles outlined below are relevant across all formats of provision, including online and blended modes. Examples are provided to illustrate each principle, but many useful additional resources are available on the CLT Hub or through discussion with Curriculum Development Officers.

Assessment for Learning Design Principle	Example of this in practice and useful resources
<p>1. Assessment should be designed to promote student learning and not only as a summative evaluation tool.</p>	<p>Select assessment formats and content which are likely to be encountered by graduates in their future employment - by undertaking the assessment, the student is gaining useful experience. For example, a coursework assessment may be in a sector-specific format; a quiz may be in the style of a relevant employer's induction process; exam questions could be based on real-world case studies.</p> <p>The types of problems/tasks that are addressed in the assessment can be incorporated into learning activities so that the links between learning and assessment are very clear.</p>
<p>2. Assessment should be designed to meet unit and course intended learning outcomes.</p>	<p>When designing assessment and feedback start by identifying the learning outcomes that you are aiming to assess. Within those learning outcomes look for the powerful verbs which provides cues about the activities we should ask students to undertake. The topic of question/task then supplies the object for the verb.</p> <p>Further details of this can be found in Sally Brown and Kay Sambell’s Advance HE publication "Assessment and Feedback in a post-pandemic era"</p>

	<p>There should be clear identification of which unit and course learning outcomes are being assessed by a particular assessment. The inclusion of course level learning outcomes can help to demonstrate how assessment in one unit follows on to assessment in future units on the course.</p>
<p>3. Assessment should be designed to develop and test skills and understanding and application of knowledge, rather than focusing on testing student's ability to recall knowledge itself.</p>	<p>One way this can be accomplished is by using authentic assessments which reflect what graduates will be doing in employment. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • case studies • giving students real experimental data, and asking them to analyse and interpret it or write an abstract • ask students to write the patient notes for an individual suffering from X disease • design experiments to prove X • blogs • podcasts • write a business plan • dragon's den style pitch <p>These types of tasks are particularly important in exams in the era of online assessments in which invigilation is not currently possible.</p>
<p>4. A course-wide approach to assessment should be taken to facilitate the students' journey through their course.</p> <p>This should take into account both the types and distribution of assessments in a year of study and across the whole course to allow assessments to build on each other.</p> <p>A course-wide strategy should also ensure appropriate spacing of assessments and protect against over-assessment of intended learning outcomes and excessive workload for students and staff.</p>	<p>A practical approach to this could be to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Start with the learning outcomes/skills that you need to assess and determine the diverse types of assessments which will best assess those. 2. Distribute these types of assessments across all stages/years to facilitate development in the skills through the course. 3. Whilst some repetition of assessment types is beneficial to development of skills, avoid excessive duplication of one assessment type. 4. Then link the assessment types to specific units <p>This will create a map of assessments (both summative and formative) across a course to help to demonstrate the spread and total number of assessments.</p> <p>It is worth noting here that formative assessments of a certain type can provide feedback for assessments of the same type in other units (see principle 10).</p>

<p>5. Subject Benchmark Statements and Professional Body accreditation requirements (if relevant) should inform the assessment strategy for a course.</p> <p>There is normally considerable flexibility in how these can be used by course teams.</p>	<p>The nature of these requirements will be course specific, but will potentially mandate the inclusion of specific types of assessment. If this is the case these should form part of the mapping exercise described in Principle 4.</p>
<p>6. There should be a diversity of assessment types in order to develop the skills required to achieve the course learning outcomes.</p>	<p>You should avoid using only one or two assessment types across a course.</p> <p>This again relates to ensuring that assessments are authentic and preparing students for employment and the examples provided for Principles 1 and 3 apply.</p> <p>Within each of these assessment types it should be clearly articulated which course and/or unit learning outcomes are being addressed and the support that will be available for developing those skills.</p>
<p>7. Assessment should be designed to be inclusive in order to cater for the diversity of our student population. The design should ensure that all students, including those with protected characteristics or other factors out of their control, are given the opportunity to meet the intended learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Utilising a broad range of assessment types (Principle 6) is beneficial for all learners. An essential element of this being successful for all students is to prepare and support them through the assessments. By enhancing assessment literacy you can empower those students who find an assessment type more challenging to accomplish the task and achieve the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>Inclusive assessment design can include flexibility in the means by which students are able to meet outcomes via assessment where appropriate, but it must still prepare students for employment and not avoid skills and learning outcomes considered essential for the course.</p> <p>Assessments should be designed so that students are not disadvantaged in demonstrating their achievements by the type of assessment chosen. Considering the 3 Rs (Remove, Reduce and Rethink) will help you to address any barriers to assessment, whilst still maintaining rigorous assessment standards. There is guidance on possible barriers linked to assessment types on the CLT Hub.</p> <p>For example, if you are intending to assess via presentations, check that this is actually required in order for the student to meet the learning outcomes. If not a requirement, then consider</p>

	<p>whether the specific method of assessment could be replaced with more flexible forms of assessment such as a poster, blog etc. (Remove) which still meet the intended learning outcomes.</p> <p>If 'presenting' is a necessary feature of the assessment design linked to the learning outcomes, then consider whether the barrier this may present can be mitigated (Reduce). This might include building in choice in terms of how the students can present e.g. recording their presentation, presenting to a smaller group or presenting with peers etc.</p> <p>If 'presenting' is a requirement and an essential form of assessment linked to learning outcomes or graduate attributes, then consider how students could be supported to overcome any barriers or challenges they may face (Rethink) e.g. can the students build up to the assessment point gradually, enabling them to practice and consolidate their skills? Could the students be supported to develop strategies to overcome any challenges they may face? A tool kit of strategies to support learners can be found on the CLT Hub.</p> <p>Whilst it is likely that there will be some situations in which individual disability action plans require individual alternative assessments these should only be used when the principles explained above are not possible or appropriate. For example there are some students who find group work challenging, but it is more beneficial for the student to prepare and support them to develop the skills to work with a group than avoid it via an alternative assessment.</p>
<p>8. The course assessment strategy should be designed to promote academic integrity as an essential element of progression through the course.</p>	<p>Assessments which require students to demonstrate their understanding and application of knowledge (see principle 3 above) will support this endeavour.</p> <p>The use of viva voce or other oral assessments can help to reduce dishonest practices.</p>
<p>9. Feedback is an integral element of assessment.</p> <p>Students should receive feedback on their learning in a variety of ways, including from teaching staff, from peers, and through the development of independent learning skills.</p>	<p>It should be very clear at the beginning of a unit how formative feedback will be provided. This should be included in the unit outline, on the unit's Moodle page and in the introductory lectures. Ideally this should initiate a dialogue between students and staff about the feedback.</p>

<p>Attention should be given to developing students' ability to identify, engage, and act upon feedback from different sources in order to support their learning and success in future summative assessments.</p>	<p>opportunities and how that feedback can be used for summative assessments</p> <p>The 'Understand, Engage, Act' Teaching Development Fund project focused on supporting an active student role in the feedback process, and shared expectations between students and staff about feedback. Resources and good practice/lessons learned are available on the CLT Hub and project staff are available to share knowledge.</p> <p>The use of a Feedback ePortfolio to log feedback across a student's journey can help to identify skill development and areas for improvement and to locate resources.</p>
<p>10. At least one formal formative feedback opportunity, with timely and appropriate feedback from teaching staff, should be provided in relation to each summative assessment task or type to help students prepare. This may be in a different unit to the assessment currently being considered but in all cases the link between the formative exercise and summative assessments should be made clear to students.</p>	<p>The mapping of summative and formative assessments across a course can identify how formative opportunities in one unit can link to another.</p> <p>Internal feedback (where students compare their current work / knowledge / competence against a reference) has been found to be more learning-focused than standard feedback from the lecturer. Sally Brown and Kay Sambell suggest a "Produce, Compare, Review" approach. This could be used really easily as a formative task. For example, set the students an essay from a past-paper.</p> <p>Produce: students write their formative essay. Compare: in an interactive session, you provide a reference essay for them to compare their work. Review: students are encouraged to make the results of their comparison explicit.</p> <p>This should be scaffolded by questions from the teacher (e.g. what is similar / different, positives and negatives...). Students can compare between themselves and should be encouraged to discuss learning points. This approach can also reduce staff time in marking formative work.</p> <p>Further details of this can be found in Sally Brown and Kay Sambell's Advance HE publication "Assessment and Feedback in a post-pandemic era"</p>
<p>11. Clear and timely communication about assessment and feedback is an essential element of a satisfying assessment experience.</p>	<p>Information about the course approach to assessment and feedback should be included in Programme Handbooks and/or Course Moodle pages. These could include course level marking criteria, descriptors of the types of assessments</p>

<p>Prior to undertaking any summative assessment task, students should be provided with clear information on (see also QA16 6.10 and 6.11):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The purpose of the assessment and why the particular form of assessment supports students to demonstrate that they have met the intended learning outcomes b. The expectations on students, including marking criteria c. The expectations of student conduct in regards to academic integrity and plagiarism, including any activity (e.g. collaboration) or use of resources that is specifically not permitted d. How previous feedback (within the unit or from a separate unit) can be used to improve their work e. When they will receive formative and summative feedback 	<p>used, descriptors of the type of feedback provided and how this can be utilised. This information can be reiterated and signposted by Directors of Studies during induction and reinduction sessions and by Personal Tutors.</p> <p>Within units, information about assessments, their marking criteria, feedback on assessments and other feedback opportunities should be made available to students via unit outlines and, where relevant, the assessment tab on Moodle pages. These should also be communicated to students in introductory lectures or at the most appropriate time within a unit to establish a dialogue between staff and students about the assessment, the feedback opportunities and how these can be used.</p> <p>Good practice (where possible) to also highlight links to future assessments/units and to graduate skills (e.g. "this format of technical document is commonly encountered in the X sector").</p> <p>Assessment specific marking criteria can help to contextualise the course marking criteria to a specific assignment. This is beneficial to the students and provides transparency in how marks will be awarded. It will also streamline the marking of summative assessment by forming the basis of marking rubrics.</p> <p>Example assessment type marking criteria will be provided for essays, presentations, posters etc to demonstrate this process and promote consistency where appropriate.</p> <p>This is particularly important for online assessments and group work.</p> <p>Produce, Compare, Review approach for formative tasks would really help with this as it provides internal feedback. As will the assessment mapping described in Principle 4.</p> <p>Please see guidance on feedback in Principle 10 and assessment mapping in Principle 4.</p>
--	---

f. How the feedback on any summative assessment can be used to improve their future work.	Please see guidance on feedback in Principle 10 and assessment mapping in Principle 4.
---	--

Owner	Education Quality and Standards Committee
Version number	1.0
Approval date	25 January 2022
Approved by	Education Quality and Standards Committee
Date of last review	25 January 2022