

Top 10 tips on... ... Assessment for Learning¹

Assessment influences what a student sees as important in their modules. Good assessment design can enhance student learning or promote a superficial approach of churning out work for the 'production line' of module requirements.

INFLUENCE OF ASSESSMENT ON STUDY

1. Provide sufficient (spaced) assessed tasks for students to be encouraged to allocate sufficient time to study over a suitable time period and avoid 'cramming'.

Tips:

- Students required to display work publicly
- Group work which encourages support for the group
- More frequent tasks rather than one end of module assessment (or build in steps)

2. Design the assessment so that students tackle the task appropriately: ie they engage in the process of learning rather than simply producing a final product

Tips:

- Allocate some percentage of the overall mark to draft work or justifications of decisions made while completing the assignment
- Allow students to show their errors and explain their corrections
- Value the learning involved rather than the final assignment

3. Give students the opportunity to practice the skills they need for each assessment.

Tips:

- Explain the assessment criteria
- Give feedback on formative work
- Discuss the assessment task with students

USING FEEDBACK TO ENHANCE LEARNING

4. Sufficient feedback given in enough detail

Tips:

- Use feedback and self-assessment sheets
- Consider using audio or video recordings
- Avoid ticks and crosses
- Make your writing legible- you would not accept unreadable student work!

5. Feedback focuses on student performance, learning or actions the student can control

Tips:

- Identify errors clearly
- Outline 'options for action'
- Avoid personal comments which can reduce a student's sense of competence (linked to motivation)

¹ Taken from Gibbs, G & Simpson, C (2004) 'Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning', *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Issue 1., and Brown, S, Race, P & Smith B, (1996) *500 Tips on Assessment*, Kogan Page: London.

6. Feedback must be timely : while it matters to the student and can be used to improve future performance

Tips:

- Discuss a model answer at the point of students submitting the work, while the ideas are fresh in their minds
- Use peer feedback: immediate peer feedback is preferable to late tutor feedback
- Computer based practice tests (eg multiple choice with feedback) can provide immediate feedback for student self-paced study

7. Feedback aligns with the purpose of the assignment and the assessment criteria

Tips:

- Align your feedback with the aim of the assignment: are you trying to influence motivation with new students or encourage reflective learning or just correct errors?
- Use self and peer assessment to encourage the internalisation of assessment criteria and standards

8. Feedback is appropriate to the student's level

Research shows that students may have one of five views of learning², ranging from passive receipt of information and active memorization of information (or procedures) to understanding and a change in personal reality. Feedback aimed at understandings cannot guide a student focused on memorisation.

Tips:

- Feedback needs to be understandable to the student and provide ways to progress
- Provide feedback sensitive to the student's understanding of the discipline involved (ie separate generic study skills feedback from discipline specific comments)

9. Feedback needs to be read and noticed

Tips:

- Get students to list points they need feedback on
- give feedback only (no grade)
- use self-assessment prior to any tutor marking
- use two-part assignments: formative feedback at part 1; grade only at part 2
- use self-assessment, tutor feedback and then supply a grade

10. Feedback is acted on by the student

Tips:

- follow-up the feedback and be encouraging
- provide feed-forward (applies to future work)
- use feedback to promote self-directed learning

Further Reading:

Gibbs, G & Simpson, C (2004) 'Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning', *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Issue 1

Brown, S, Race, P & Smith B (1996) *500 Tips on Assessment*, London: Kogan Page

² Säljö, R (1982) *Learning and Understanding*, Goteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.