

Assessment types

This handout will cover:

- What is assessment?
- The assessment cycle
- Assessment types: initial, diagnostic, holistic, formative and summative
- Assessment methods
- Reading list
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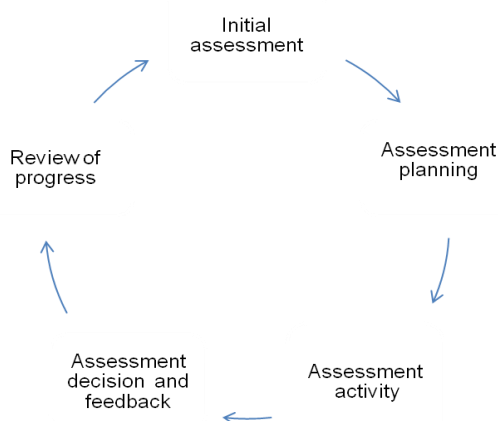
What is assessment?

Assessment is a way of finding out if learning has taken place, it is a process of making a decision regarding your learner's knowledge and/or performance against set criteria. Assessment activities can be *informal* to check progress – known as *formative assessment* (or *assessment for learning*). They can also be *formal* to confirm achievement – known as *summative assessment* (or *assessment of learning*).

Formative assessment checks progress i.e. by using questions, quizzes, discussions etc and is *ongoing*. Summative assessment confirms achievement (or not) i.e. by using tests, exams, assignments, observations etc and is usually *at the end* of a unit or programme.

The assessment cycle

Assessment usually follows a cycle:



Initial assessment – ascertaining information regarding your learners: for example, any specific assessment requirements they may have or any further training and support that they may need. This information can be obtained in a range of ways, for example, application forms, interviews, diagnostic tests and discussions. This

process might not always be carried out by you but the information obtained must be passed on to you. Initial assessment is known as assessment *for* learning, because it helps prepare learners *for* assessment and identifies their potential.

Assessment planning – agreeing suitable types and methods of assessment with learners, setting appropriate target dates and involving others as necessary, such as colleagues, witnesses or workplace supervisors.

Assessment activity – using relevant approaches and activities, for example, observation, questioning, assignments or gathering appropriate evidence of competence. Assessment can be formative (usually ongoing and informal to check progress e.g. a discussion) and/or summative (usually at the end and formal e.g. a test). Summative assessment is often known as assessment *of* learning because it counts towards the achievement *of* something.

Assessment decision and feedback – making a judgement of success or otherwise or allocating a grade and advising how to achieve a higher grade in future. Providing constructive and developmental feedback and agreeing upon any further action that may be necessary.

Review of progress – reviewing progress and achievement and discussing any other issues that may be relevant to the learning and assessment process.

The cycle can then begin again with an initial assessment regarding the next area to be assessed. Records should be maintained throughout all aspects of the assessment cycle and quality assurance activities should take place on an ongoing basis.

Types of assessment

Assessment types relate to the *purpose* of assessment i.e. the reason assessment is carried out.

Five frequently used types are:

- initial
- diagnostic
- holistic
- formative
- summative

Initial and diagnostic assessments are the formal processes whereby you can ascertain your learners' prior skills and knowledge. It's also an opportunity to identify any aspects which might otherwise go unnoticed, for example, poor numerical or writing skills. Initial assessment, as the word implies, is carried out at the beginning

of something, for example, a course or a session. Diagnostic assessment can be carried out at any time to diagnose any gaps in learning, or any particular learning or learner needs.

Holistic assessment enables learners to demonstrate several criteria from different aspects or units at the same time. You might be able to observe naturally occurring situations in addition to what had originally been planned. For example, if you are watching a learner perform a task and they also do something which had not been planned for but which occurs naturally during the activity. Don't discount this, but inform your learner you were able to assess them for these other aspects as well.

Holistic assessment is beneficial to all concerned when assessing occupational competence, particularly in a work environment. It can save duplication and repetition. It could be that you carry out a holistic assessment and find your learner is competent at most but not all of the criteria you planned to assess. If this is the case, you can still sign off what they have achieved and then update the assessment plan to assess the remaining criteria on another occasion. Alternatively, you might be able to ask questions or hold a professional discussion with your learner to evidence any gaps (if this is acceptable). If so, you would need to keep a record of what was asked along with the responses your learner gave. Without records, there's no proof of what has occurred and therefore what has been achieved.

Formative assessment should take place continually and is usually carried out informally to check progress, identify any support requirements and inform further development. Assessing your learners on a formative basis will enable you to see if they are ready for a summative or final assessment. Formative assessment is usually informal, devised by yourself, and often called assessment *for* learning because it helps prepare learners *for* formal assessment.

Summative assessment usually occurs at the end of a session, programme, topic, unit or full qualification. It is a measure of achievement rather than progress. This type of assessment can often be quite stressful to learners and sometimes leads to a fail result, even though the learner is quite capable under other circumstances. Summative assessment is usually formal, devised by the awarding organisation that accredits the qualification, and is often called assessment *of* learning because it counts towards the achievement *of* something.

Different subjects will require different types of assessment. You will need to consider *what* type of assessment you need to use and *why*. You can then plan *when*, *where* and *how* this will take place.

For example:

What - an *initial assessment*

Why - to ascertain *subject knowledge & skills*

When - at the *beginning of the programme*

Where - at the *organisation*

How - by questions and discussion

Whatever type of assessment you use with your learners, you need to ensure you are assessing only what needs to be assessed, i.e. the requirements of a unit from a qualification, aspects of a work role, or progress towards particular topics.

Assessment methods

Assessment *methods* are different to *types*. A method is *how* the assessment type will be used e.g. questions for initial assessment, observation for formative assessment, exam for summative assessment. The methods can be formal or informal. Formal methods count towards achievement whereas informal methods check ongoing progress

You might be provided with tests or assignments for your learners to complete. To be sure your learners are ready for assessment you could use activities, quizzes and smaller tasks for them to carry out on a formative basis. This would make the assessment process more interesting and highlight any areas which need further development before the summative assessment takes place.

If you are not provided with assessment activities, make sure you choose types and methods which are appropriate, and that the activities you use will cover all the required criteria at the right level.

Reading list

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2016) *Principles and Practices of Assessment* London Learning Matters SAGE

Ollin R & Tucker J (2016) *The Vocational Assessor Handbook* (6th Edn) London Kogan Page

Read H (2016) *The Best Assessor's Guide* Bideford Read On Publications Ltd
Tummons J (2011) *Assessing Learning in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Wilson L (2012) *Practical teaching: A guide to assessment and quality assurance* Andover Cengage Learning

Website list

Assessment in education - <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/caie20/24/1>

Assessor resources - www.anngravells.com/resources/assessment123

Peer and self-assessment: www.nclrc.org/essentials/assessing/peereval.htm

Plagiarism: www.plagiarism.org

Chartered Institute for Educational Assessors – www.ciea.org.uk

Developing Assessment Feedback - <http://escalate.ac.uk/4147>

Initial Assessment Tools – www.toolslibrary.co.uk

Learning Preferences – www.vark-learn.com

Types of assessment -
<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/resources/assessment/types.html>

Methods of assessment -
<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/resources/methods.html>