

Assessment feedback feedforward

Assessment design

Contents

Assessment feedback feedforward	1
Assessment design	1
Introduction	3
Inclusive assessment.....	3
Useful resources	3
The REAP principles	4
REAP	4
Assessment criteria.....	5
Valid	5
Reliable.....	6
Equitable and fair.....	6
Practicable.....	7
Benefits of clear criteria in assessment	7
Assessment questions.....	7
Writing Good Exam Questions.....	7
Guidance on writing essay test items	8
Bloom’s revised taxonomy.....	8
Guidance on writing learning outcomes.....	8
Multiple choice questions (MCQs).....	8
Multiple choice test questions.....	8
Introducing students to the use of multiple choice questions: case study.....	9

Technology in assessment	9
Working with students.....	9
Case Study: Maximising student input on feedback.....	10
Introduction	11
Background	11
Description of key issues.....	11
Present the story / facts.....	11
Outcome, next steps.....	12
Oxford Brookes' guides.....	12
Group work as assessment	12
Reflective practice as assessment	13
Using Mahara to support reflective practice and assessment: case study	14
Mahara training materials	14
Turnitin.....	14
Turnitin links	14
Turnitin case studies	14
Generic feedback	15
Oxford Brookes' guide	15
Audio feedback	15
References	16

Introduction

Evaluating understanding and progress, and providing constructive feedback are essential components of any course. Students need to know that they are 'getting it' and teachers need to know that their materials and practices are working.

Matching assessment design to the learning outcomes is a key step to ensure there is alignment between:

- your intended learning outcomes;
- student learning activities and
- the formative and summative assessment you require them to undertake.

Assessments should provide evidence that students have achieved the learning outcomes.

The method of assessment you choose should reflect the type of knowledge or behaviours described in the learning outcomes. So for example, if a learning outcome related to using a piece of technology, the learning activities and the assessment should involve “using” – so observation or peer review assessment could be an option. It would not be appropriate to ask the students to write about using the piece of technology. You would not be able to assess your students’ use of the technology.

In the following pages you’ll find more information on writing assessment criteria and questions, group work and reflective practice.

Inclusive assessment

“Inclusivity is a very important factor in assessment design as fair assessment must reflect the needs of a diverse student body.”

(JISC 2016)

Useful resources

University of the Highlands and Islands is addressing this. In the meantime, here are some useful resources to get you started:

[JISC Inclusive assessment](#). This also includes links to helpful resources and a Sheffield Hallam University case study.

7 steps to [inclusive assessment](#), Plymouth University:

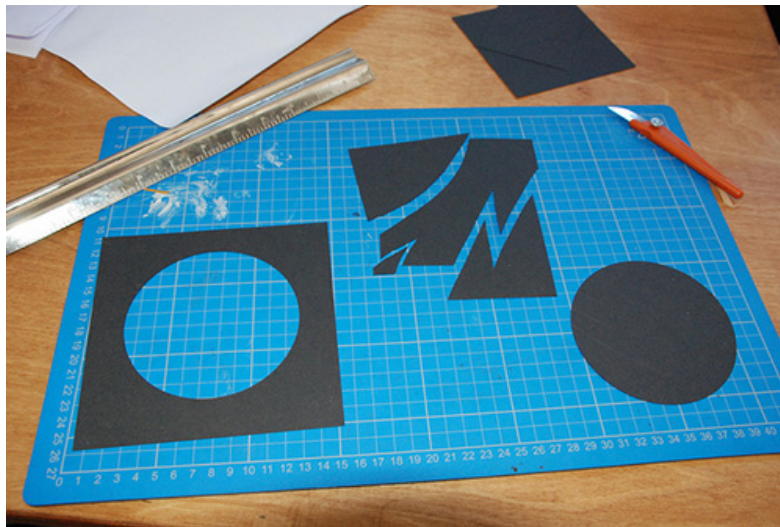
Top 10 tips on [Inclusive Assessment](#)

The REAP principles

REAP

The [REAP](#) (Re-Engineering Assessment Practices in Scottish Higher Education) project provides an excellent guide for the design of assessment in higher or further education. Within the resources tab on their website there are two sections which you may find particularly helpful:

- Assessment principles: some possible candidates
- Questions to ask yourself about your assessment



'[S2 Clock Project](#)' by [Jordanhill School D&T Dept](#)
from Flickr, [CC BY 2.0](#)'

Assessment criteria

An assessment should be:

Valid



image by [Hywards](#) from [FreeDigitalPhotos](#)

It measures what it is supposed to measure - does the content address learning outcomes?

Reliable



Image by '[Stuart Miles](#)' from [FreeDigitalPhotos](#)

It achieves similar results in scoring and grading across students with similar abilities.

Equitable and fair



Image by '[Salvatore Vuono](#)' from [FreeDigitalPhotos](#)

It is accessible to all learners who have the potential to succeed in it.

Practicable



Image by '[posterize](#)' from [FreeDigitalPhotos](#)

Assessors and students need to have adequate resources to carry out assessments effectively and efficiently.

Benefits of clear criteria in assessment

This video by the Higher Education Academy explores the benefits of providing clear criteria in assessment.

- [Dr Jon Callow on student perceptions of assessment](#) (Vimeo 1 min 54 sec)

Assessment questions

Writing Good Exam Questions

There is certainly a difference between good and bad questions, or rather, easy questions that only test recall, and well-designed questions that engage students and draw on higher levels of thinking skills. [Dr Kate Exley's \(2012\) Writing Good Exam Questions - A Self-study Workbook](#) gives advice on writing masters-level examination questions. She provides user-friendly advice on writing questions and gives many examples and tips.

“The goal – Test items should be really difficult for people who don't understand the subject material, but they should be straightforward for those who do. If an item is difficult because of complicated wording (e.g., double negatives) or vocabulary, you will end up testing language skills rather than ability in the discipline”

Exley (2012: 6)

Guidance on writing essay test items

You may wish to review the guidance on writing essay test items by the [University of Illinois](#).

Bloom's revised taxonomy

Bloom's revised taxonomy provides an excellent framework for designing learning outcomes and associated learning activities, and can also be highly effective in supporting the design of formative assessment.

In reviewing assessment design consider:

- testing your questions by answering them yourself and checking whether you got what you expected;
- ensuring that your assessments address your learning outcomes;
- checking what knowledge, skills and cognitive processes students will use to answer the assessments to ensure they are working at the appropriate level – see Blooms Revised Taxonomy and the SQA Level descriptors.

Guidance on writing learning outcomes

Guidance on writing learning outcomes using [Bloom's revised taxonomy](#).

Guidance on writing learning outcomes particularly relating to [new modules and revalidation](#) of programmes.

Multiple choice questions (MCQs)

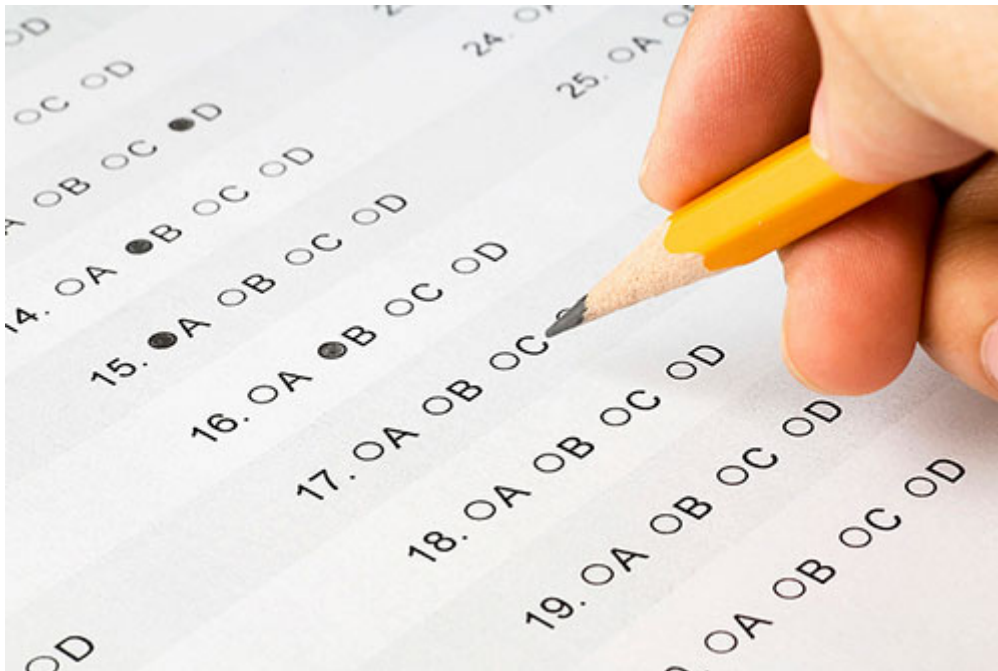
Using multiple choice questions can provide valuable formative feedback for students and can also be used effectively for summative assessment.

Multiple choice test questions

You may also wish to look at writing good multiple choice test questions from the [Centre of Teaching Vanderbilt University](#).

Introducing students to the use of multiple choice questions: case study

It is important to familiarise students with the multiple choice process and technology you are going to use. The case study (See online version) by Dr Gareth Davies, Programme Leader MEd, Lews Castle College illustrates how students on the Introduction to Psychology module were given practice multiple choice questions as a piece of formative assessment to allow them to familiarise themselves with the process and the technology.



'Exam' by [Alberto G.](#) from Flickr, [CC BY 2.0](#)

Technology in assessment

A variety of technologies are available to support you in assessment such as [Mahara](#) (ePortfolio), [Medial streaming service](#), (where students can upload video demonstrations); and [Turnitin](#) (used to improve academic writing; peer review option).

Working with students

Encouraging students to discuss their feedback from assessments and how they will act on it is an important part of their learning process. It can provide motivation, focus and support their assessment activity. So it is worthwhile thinking about what opportunities you provide to support such conversations. The University of Strathclyde's [Principle 6: Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning \(peer and teacher-student\)](#) - Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning (peer and teacher-student) explores this area in more detail.

“Research is increasingly demonstrating the importance of tutor-student dialogue in both understanding assessment expectations and being able to make use of feedback.”

**A marked improvement: Transforming assessment in Higher Education.
Higher Education Academy (2012: 10)**



['Writing Center IMG 7886'](#) by [Eastern Arizona College](#)
from Flickr, [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

This video produced by JISC promotes the benefits of working with students as key stakeholders in the design and implementation of assessment and feedback.

- [Transforming the assessment and feedback landscape: reconceptualising feedback](#) (Youtube)

This short case study by Wendy Maltinsky, Programme Director - Psychology, Health – Inverness College, illustrates how one programme team sought to increase student engagement and discussion with their feedback.

Case Study: Maximising student input on feedback

Wendy Maltinsky, Programme Director, Psychology and Health, Inverness College UHI

Introduction

This case study provides an illustration of how the Psychology teaching team in the University enhanced their practice in assessment feedback and feedforward and reviews and demonstrates the potential benefits of ensuring that the student is included in the process to encourage them to consider the actions they must take.

Background

A workshop session was held in 2014 with externals using the HEA (Higher Education Academy) Self Evaluation templates. The aim of the workshop was to define what the team were striving for in assessment and how they would plan to achieve this. It was recognised that often students appeared to not read, acknowledge or act on the wealth of feedback and feedforward received.

We examined some common experiences and established key philosophies:

It was agreed that:

- assessment at earlier levels would focus on learning how to learn which would progress to learning what to learn increasingly
- student engagement in the feedback/marking process would help to place the responsibility for learning with the student

Description of key issues

A key driver was to look at maximising student input and reducing the overwhelming demand on staff time at marking points.

Present the story / facts

The current system involved staff identifying one or two items that the student should seek to address to improve their grades. The team had piloted a check system by which students were asked to tick to indicate that they had read the feedback; that they had collated it to take to their next PAT (Personal Academic Tutor) session and most importantly that they had identified what they would do in order to address the feedback suggestions.

To support this process the team have also introduced an assessment review as the first meeting with the PAT at the start of the academic year (for levels 8, 9, and 10) to which students are asked to bring these assessments.

Outcome, next steps

Currently the process still relies on the student to take the initiative. To properly close the loop it would be good if there was a way of ensuring that PAT's get a copy simultaneously as students. A facility by which it would be possible to easily include the PAT in the feedback to the student (perhaps allowing Pat's access to the relevant grade centres? Or having a system which automatically downloads all of the student's feedback to the relevant PAT) would render this more possible.

Further information:

Wendy Maltinsky, Programme Director - Psychology, Health – Inverness College:
Wendy.Maltinsky.ic@uhi.ac.uk

Link to HEA Self Evaluation Document; Link to PAT resources.

Oxford Brookes' guides

You may find the following Oxford Brookes' guides helpful:

- How to [improve your students' performance in 90 minutes!](#)
- When and how to use [Face-to-Face Feedback](#)

Group work as assessment

Group work is becoming increasingly popular as a method of assessment as it reflects the demands of the workplace. Here are five useful resources to support you in using group work with your students:

1. [Getting the most from groupwork assessment](#) (Oxford Brookes University)
2. [Teaching toolkit: large and small group teaching](#) (University College Dublin)
3. [Small group teaching](#) (Oxford Brookes University)
4. Bobby Elliott (SQA, 2008) provides a useful short report on '[Online collaborative assessment](#)'. In the report Elliott presents a set of 6 useful criteria for assessing online group work. He also provides additional criteria gained from his review of exemplar marking schemes.



Students in group work activities
West Highland College Prospectus photography,
Ewen Weatherspoon Photographer, UHI Image Library

Reflective practice as assessment

The use of reflective journals or portfolios to record learning over a period of time is also increasingly used as an assessment method. The University of Hong Kong provide a wide range of very useful [assessment resources](#) including a guide to using reflective journals in teaching which can be accessed via the 'assessment methods' tab.

“We do not learn from experience We learn from reflecting on our experience”.

John Dewey

Using Mahara to support reflective practice and assessment: case study

This short [case study](#) illustrates how Mahara has been used by students on the BA Applied Music as a tool for reflective practice and assessment.

Mahara training materials

- [Tutor training in Mahara](#)
- [Examples of sample portfolios in Mahara](#)
- [Sample Templates](#)

Turnitin

Turnitin links

Staff are increasingly turning to Turnitin as an effective assessment and feedback tool. If you are considering using Turnitin you must first ensure that you have an official Turnitin account. If you don't have one you need to log a call with the [Help Desk](#).

The EDU has produced an illustrated [staff guide to Turnitin](#), which includes step by step instructions on how to link an assignment in Brightspace to Turnitin, optional settings and how to use the tool for grading.

Additionally, there are links to official [Turnitin guidance in Mahara](#) (including links to webcasts and a blog).

Turnitin case studies

Unitec (the largest Institute of Technology in New Zealand) has been using Feedback Studio for more than a decade to [reduce academic misconduct and lighten the burden of grading for teachers](#).

Dr Cath Ellis from Huddersfield describes how the School of Humanities has adopted a [paperless assessment and feedback policy](#) and the way in which GradeMark was pivotal in the process.

Generic feedback

Generic feedback to all students following an assessment can be an effective and timely method of providing good quality feedback. This can include common feedback appropriate to all of the students and could be on referencing and the tutor's broad expectations of how the assessment should have been approached. Providing generic feedback can help students understand that their challenges are shared by their peers and can also provide an opportunity for feedforward – perhaps a discussion on how to approach the next assessment.

For the tutor it can save time by eliminating the need to repeat the same feedback to every student; and allows them to focus specific feedback for individual students.

Consider creating:

- FAQs for your students highlighting common problems which students experience e.g. referencing correctly;
- model answers;
- lists of common issues faced by previous students.

This generic feedback could be discussed by your students and then used as a basis for individual feedback to students.

Oxford Brookes' guide

Oxford Brookes 3 step guide to [using generic feedback effectively](#).

Audio feedback

Staff using audio feedback have found that it provides efficient and more personal feedback to students.

In this [short paper from JISC](#), Bob Rotherham provides some tips for audio feedback.

Turnitin's GradeMark allows staff to record audio feedback for assessments:

- [Turnitin interactive GradeMark tutorial](#)

The benefits of audio feedback for both the student and the tutor are highlighted in this video by Professor Jamie Quinton, School of Chemical and Physical Sciences at Flinders University, Adelaide. He illustrates using Adobe Acrobat to record written and audio assessment comments.

- [Assoc. Prof. Jamie Quinton - Using audio feedback using Adobe Acrobat](#) (Youtube)

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