

UNIVERSAL UNIT

UNIT 4

ASSESSMENT

Learning outcomes

Trainees will:

- Consider the purpose of a different range of assessment tools
- Be aware of matching the correct type of assessment to the right purpose
- Be aware of the pitfalls of indiscriminate use of assessment processes

ONLINE RESOURCES

The content and tasks throughout these PDFs are supported by online resources that are designed to facilitate and supplement your training experience.

Links to these are signposted where appropriate. The resources use graphics and interactive elements to:

- Highlight salient points
- Provide at-a-glance content summaries
- Introduce further points of interest
- Offer visual context
- Break down and clearly present the different stages and elements of processes, tasks, practices, and theories

The online resources offer great benefits, both for concurrent use alongside the PDFs, or as post-reading revision and planning aids.

Please note that the resources cannot be used in isolation without referencing the PDFs. Their purpose is to complement and support your training process, rather than lead it.

You should complete any learning or teaching tasks and additional reading detailed in this PDF to make full use of the Advanced training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.

To find out more about the resources, how they work, and how they can enhance your training, visit the homepage at: www.education.gov.uk/lamb

The first resource for this unit can be found here:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/assessment/intro

You have seen that personalisation can involve thinking about a wide range of teaching and learning activities in a variety of settings. It is vital that teachers can evaluate how well pupils are progressing and what further help (or reduction in help) they may need, regardless of the learning outcome. Whilst theories of personalisation put a premium on Assessment for Learning, the following section will consider assessment for learning as a part of general assessment strategies.

Assessment strategies

Teachers and other staff who work with pupils with SEND will be familiar with a wide range of assessment formats, but they may not necessarily be clear about which assessments to use in which circumstances. All assessments involve gathering evidence and then making some judgement against a common set of criteria-even if this criteria is implicit.

There are three determinants to deciding whether or not an assessment strategy will be successful. At their heart is choosing the right assessment to match the purpose. To answer this there are three questions that need to be answered:

- 1) What is the exact purpose of the assessment?
- 2) Is the assessment being used fit for this purpose?
- 3) Does it actually achieve the purpose?

But there is a range of assessment purposes that schools frequently wish to employ for pupils with SEND. These extend way beyond national curriculum and GCSE assessments. For example, some uses identified by Paul Newton (2007) are:

Pupil monitoring	Are the pupils making sufficient progress?
Formative	To encourage student ownership of the learning process and determine the next steps.
Social evaluation	To judge the social or the personal value of pupil achievement.
Diagnosis	To determine the type and extent of learning difficulties (usually against well established criteria for intervention).
Eligibility for provision	
Screening	To identify pupils who are significantly different from peers in any aspect of performance or development.
Segregation	To determine different pupil groupings against aptitude or attainment, usually to simplify the instructional process.
Guidance	To identify the most suitable setting or courses for pupils to pursue to make the most of their aptitude.
Transfer	To identify the needs of students transferring to a new setting, frequently at age related points such as primary-secondary, secondary-FE.
Certification	To warrant the trust of another stakeholder in the pupil's abilities.
National accounting	Or system monitoring (in case pupil assessments are aggregated to act as a proxy indicator).

Task 1

Present the table above to a small group of colleagues and lead a discussion of the following points:

- In your school, which if any of the above assessment protocols tends to dominate thinking about assessment in general and for pupils with SEND in particular?
- If you had to re-prioritise, which functions of assessment would you pay more attention to and why?
- Take pupil who has SEND in the area of this module. Are there assessment strategies that could help them more if they were prioritised?
- For the same pupil, would assessments taken out of a classroom setting be useful to parents, professionals and the pupil?

Assessment for Learning

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education conducted a project into successful implementation of inclusive assessment in mainstream settings in 2006-2008.

“The key difference between Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning can be identified as the purpose for which teachers and other professionals gather evidence of learning. This does not imply that there should be a choice between Assessment for or Assessment of Learning – both have pedagogical functions that support pupil achievement. Discussions with project experts indicated that the crucial issue is indeed using the type of assessment that best suits the learning goal and purpose. If the educational purpose is to improve learning, then Assessment for Learning is best suited. If the educational purpose is to report on a current situation and to compare pupils against predetermined standards and/or other pupils, then Assessment of Learning should be used.” (Assessment in Inclusive Settings, 2009 <http://www.european-agency.org>)

However, perhaps the contrast between assessment for learning and assessment of learning for summative purposes may not be as stark as some have argued. Although there may be a variety of purposes for assessment, some tools may be the same (e.g. questioning pupils in class, or providing written feedback on pupils' work). Wynne Harlen notes that Formative assessment data can be used to provide summative assessment data:

“When evidence is gathered in a lesson it may be used on the spot or later to help students achieve the lesson goals. In doing this the teacher will interpret the evidence in relation to the progress of the individuals involved, so the judgment will be student- referenced as well as related to the lesson outcome criteria. However, if the evidence is also used to report on a wider set of skills of or knowledge, then it must be evaluated according to that criteria only.”

(Harlen, W. (2007) *On the relationship between assessment for formative and summative purposes* in *Assessment for Learning*.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0969594970040304#preview>).

So, the same evidence can be used for both purposes providing that for summative data exactly the same criteria are used for all students alike. It is therefore very important that teachers always know exactly why the assessment is taking place and what use it actually will be put to. Assessment for the sake of it is counter productive and extremely time consuming for teachers and pupils alike.

Task 2

With a group of colleagues, discuss how your own school's approach to Assessing Pupil's Progress incorporates elements of formative and summative assessment:

- Are you clear as to the purpose of the assessment activity?
- What criteria do you employ if the assessment is pupil referenced? Diligence, improvement made, distance travelled for example?
- Listen to the MP3 clip "strategies for Assessment" and note how the teachers integrate assessment into their teaching practice for pupils with SEND.

Listen to this clip: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/assessment/strategies

How does Assessment for learning help pupils make progress?

The actors involved in *Assessment for Learning* are able to provide insights into progress that a pupil has achieved and how the school contributed to this development; the actors involved in *Assessment of Learning* include professionals who are external to the school situation (e.g. inspectors) and may be required to provide a picture of a school at a particular point in time, but they may not always know the school context and life in the necessary detail.

Overall, *Assessment for Learning* is concerned with collecting evidence about learning that is used to adapt teaching and plan next educational steps. Evidence about learning is crucial as it indicates if there has been a shift (or not) in the process of learning of a pupil. On the basis of such evidence, teachers can formulate targets/goals and are able to provide pupils with feedback about their learning (see Hattie and Timperley, 2007) clearly indicating to a pupil not just what they need to learn, but also giving them information on how best they can learn it, therefore contributing to a pupils' reflection on their own learning.

Assessment for Learning and Pupils with SEND

Assessment for Learning is often described as involving a form of self-reflection, or more specifically, as a means by which pupils reflect on their own learning as they are engaged in an interactive 'feedback loop' with their teachers.

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/assessment/feedback

This is clearly presented by the Assessment Reform Group (2002) who describe Assessment *for Learning* as:

“The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there”.

(Black, Paul and Harrison, Christine and Lee, Claire and Marshall, Bethan and William, Dylan (2002) Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom. The King's College 'Black Box' Series. nferNelson, London).

Assessment *for Learning* within this context involves issues of self-reflection and self-assessment that develops a pupils' own understanding of how learning is taking place and how it can be developed. This is particularly relevant as Assessment *for Learning* emphasizes assessment as a process of meta-cognition (see for example the notion of Assessment as Learning in Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education, 2006). These notions, however, are not always the main focus when the concept of Assessment *for Learning* is used more generally by teachers. These elements can lead some to conclude that assessment for learning is a considerable challenge to people who have many forms of SEND, particularly learning difficulties. Others argue that teachers working in the SEND field have a particularly good grasp of assessment for learning strategies that can be shared with other teachers.

Meijer (2003) for example suggests that what is good for pupils with special educational needs is also good for all (*Inclusive Education* 2011. London: Routledge). However it is important to note that such assertions are not easy to prove or disprove, for example in the seminal work on assessment for learning *Inside the Black Box*, Black and William, 1998), issues around Assessment *for Learning* and pupils with SEND are only very marginally dealt with.

Assessment *for Learning* – a highly relevant concept for pupils with SEND

Listen to the MP3 audio clip “MLD Assessment for Learning Explained”

Listen to this clip: www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/assessment/af

The most crucial outcome emerging from discussion about assessment for learning and pupils with SEND is the widespread agreement that Assessment *for Learning* is a significant element in successful teaching and learning of teaching with all pupils, including those with SEN.

In essence, the critical question to ask is not *whether* Assessment *for* Learning can be applied to pupils with special educational needs, but rather *how* it can be applied.

In particular, to be successfully applied the pupils must understand the criteria for success.

Task 3

With a group of colleagues consider one or a group of pupils with the SEND you have elected to study. First, listen to the MP3 audio clip “MLD Assessment for learning class room examples”.

Listen to this clip:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/assessment/afl-examples

How relevant are they to the pupil you have chosen?

What are the potential barriers to them understanding the success criteria for assessment for learning and how could you overcome them?

PUPIL NAME: TYPE OF SEND:	
Barriers	Solutions
1	
2	
3	

The following ideas stem directly from the work of the European Agency for Special Educational Needs and its project on inclusive assessment. The full report can be downloaded here: (Assessment in Inclusive Settings, 2009 <http://www.european-agency.org>)

The many project experts involved in the European Agency for special educational needs investigation into assessment for learning noted that in particular, active approaches – problem solving actively engaging pupils in teaching and learning processes – were considered as crucial strategies to be used in conjunction with Assessment *for* Learning for pupils with SEND:

“... such pedagogy is very important; we need to encourage this with our pupils with SEN. They can or have had decisions taken away/made for them with regard to individual progress/assessment. Where possible and appropriate pupils should be involved.”

Project experts from every European country involved reported that often examples of such interactive approaches are difficult to find, particularly in secondary education. It was acknowledged that:

“in primary grades teachers use such pedagogy far more often than in higher grades”.

Often such approaches have been explicitly used as a means of promoting meta-cognitive skills for pupils with SEN:

“...we often use the process of meta-cognition with pupils with SEN, and not with other pupils and this is a pity.”

The essential aim of employing the ‘feedback loop’ within Assessment for Learning is to promote pupils’ meta-cognition; that is their own understanding of not just what they learn, but *how they learn* and can learn in the best way.

Concerning the use of other Assessment for Learning tools, project experts highlighted that learning portfolios where pupils record their learning and reflect on their own progress portfolios were currently successfully used within many Agency countries for pupils with SEN:

“... [a] portfolio is a good way to find the best way of learning ... it is an empowering tool ...”

Portfolios can aid dialogue with pupils, supporting their self-assessment:

“... it is a good reflective method for all students to own ... pupils can see their progression and be proud. A portfolio enhances creative self-reflective competences on the part of the child ...”

In addition, project experts also indicated that the portfolio – if complemented with information, for example the pupil’s IEP or specialist therapeutic programmes – could be a tool for dialogue with other professionals and parents.

The principles of assessment for learning

See online resource:

www.education.gov.uk/lamb/autism/assessment/afl-principles

There are ten principles underpinning effective assessment for learning:

1. Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning.

A teacher's planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. It also has to be flexible to respond to initial and emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work. How learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress should also be planned.

2. Assessment for learning should focus on how students learn

The process of learning has to be in the minds of both learner and teacher when assessment is planned and when the evidence is interpreted. Learners should become as aware of the 'how' of their learning as they are of the 'what'.

3. Assessment for learning should be recognized as central to classroom practice

Much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be described as assessment. That is, tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed and interpreted, and judgments are made about how learning can be improved. These assessment processes are an essential part of everyday classroom practice and involve both teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision-making.

4. Assessment for learning should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers

Teachers require the professional knowledge and skills to: plan for assessment; observe learning; analyze and interpret evidence of learning; give feedback to learners and support learners in self-assessment. Teachers should be supported in developing these skills through initial and continuing professional development.

5. Assessment for learning should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact

Teachers should be aware of the impact that comments, marks and grades can have on learners' confidence and enthusiasm and should be as constructive as possible in the feedback that they give. Comments that focus on the work rather than the person are more constructive for both learning and motivation.

6. Assessment for learning should take account of the importance of learner motivation

Assessment that encourages learning fosters motivation by emphasizing progress and achievement rather than failure. Comparison with others who have been more successful is unlikely to motivate learners. It can also lead to their withdrawing from the learning process in areas where they have been made to feel they are 'no good'. Motivation can be preserved and enhanced by assessment methods which protect the learner's autonomy, provide some choice and constructive feedback, and create opportunity for self-direction.

7. Assessment for learning should promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed

For effective learning to take place learners need to understand what it is they are trying to achieve - and want to achieve it. Understanding and commitment follows when learners have some part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress. Communicating assessment criteria involves discussing them with learners using terms that they can understand, providing examples of how the criteria can be met in practice and engaging learners in peer and self-assessment.

8. Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve

Learners need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning. Teachers should:

- Pinpoint the learner's strengths and advise on how to develop them
- Be clear and constructive about any weaknesses and how they might be addressed
- Provide opportunities for learners to improve upon their work.

9. Assessment for learning develops learners' capacity for self-assessment so that they can become reflective and self-managing

Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, new knowledge and new understandings. They are able to engage in self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.

10. Assessment for learning should recognise the full range of achievements of all learners

Assessment for learning should be used to enhance all learners' opportunities to learn in all areas of educational activity. It should enable all learners to achieve their best and to have their efforts recognized.

Task 4

This can be done as a group or alone.

Evidence shows that sometimes feedback to pupils is not always effective and occasionally it is counter productive. Consider an attempt to feedback to pupils that has not had the effect you wanted. For example, the pupil may have misunderstood, or not improved at all after you made written comments or gave verbal feedback.

Now, using the bullet list below consider if adjusting the feedback in light of the following insights may have helped.

Research Evidence suggests that there are some very common reasons for feedback going wrong:

- *The teacher and /or pupils are unclear about what was to be learned.* This needs to be *negotiated* even when pupils are determining some of their own learning pathway.
- Questioning strategies were not considered as a part of the planning- e.g. asking pupils what the teacher knows already, asking too many questions at once, only asking the best pupils, ignoring answers, not building on answers because of sticking to a script
- *Success criteria not clear- these need to be explicit and exemplified/modeled.* Note that modeling is not just the same as demonstrating, modeling may involve the teacher or another pupil in “thinking aloud” for the benefit of the target pupil, in order that the cognitive processes involved in achieving the goal are made explicit.
- *Pupils not really engaged in evaluating their own learning in any depth.* Smiley faces alone can be tokenistic, as can vague summaries of effort made –for example “I tried quite hard”
- *Teacher, peer or self- assessment not specific to the learning task* e.g. “A good try” “It was OK” “Could have done better” “Ask for help in future”. Remember the feedback should be focused on the next steps forward and be specific about how this could be achieved.

(Taken from Stobart, G. (2008) *Testing Times: the uses and abuses of assessment*. New York: Routledge).

Task 5

Share the following statements with a group of colleagues. Ask them to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statements regarding difficulties that teachers may encounter with assessment regimes and why.

1) Effective Learning

- Teachers’ tests encourage rote and superficial learning; this is seen even where teachers say they want to develop understanding – and many seem unaware of the inconsistency.
- The questions and other methods used are not discussed with or shared between teachers in the same school, and they are not critically reviewed in relation to what they actually assess.
- For primary teachers particularly, there is a tendency to emphasise quantity and presentation of work and to neglect its quality in relation to work.

2) Negative Impact

- The giving of marks and the grading functions are over-emphasised, while the giving of useful advice and the learning function are under-emphasised.
- Use of approaches in which pupils are compared with one another, the prime purpose of which appears to them to be competition rather than personal improvement. In consequence, assessment feedback teaches pupils with low attainments that they lack 'ability', so they are de-motivated, believing they are not able to learn.

3) Managerial Role

- Teachers' feedback to pupils often seems to serve social and managerial functions, often at the expense of the learning functions.
- Teachers are often able to predict pupils' results on external tests – because their own tests imitate them – but at the same time they know too little about their pupils' learning needs.
- The collection of marks to fill up records is given greater priority than the analysis of pupils' work to discern learning needs; furthermore, some teachers pay no attention to the assessment records of previous teachers of their pupils.

(Adapted from *Inside the Black Box* – Paul Black and Dylan William 2001)