

# Thinking about Assessment

Looking at assessment across a programme it is important to consider types, levels, contexts and disciplines.

## ASSESSMENT TYPES

### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The main purpose of summative assessment is to sum up what each individual achieves and provide information in a way that is suitable for use beyond the programme, e.g. access to further stages of education or to employment. It is therefore often end point and usually involves numbers/grades.



### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The main purpose of formative assessment is to use evaluations of what students know and can do in planning future learning activities. It is often a process that is used by educators and learners during instruction (teaching) that provides information (feedback) to adjust ongoing learning and teaching strategies to help students improve their achievement of learning outcomes. It can take a range of forms from highly structured, planned activities through to being more informal and ad hoc as an element of everyday teaching. It usually involves words.



## ASSESSMENT LEVELS

- At the start of a programme, early assignments that enable students to achieve, so long as they are contributing to the process, can be really useful. In the first half, of the first semester, of the first year, assignments should be low stakes and designed so that their attainment is feasible for students who are engaging with the content.
- Where new approaches are introduced across a programme these should be phased in slowly, carefully and in a planned manner. New approaches should be accompanied with induction so that students fully understand what is involved and how they can be successful.



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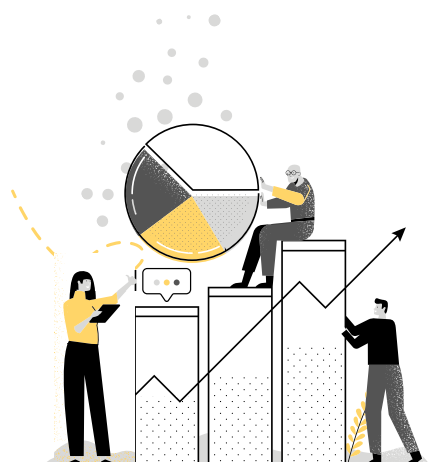


## ASSESSMENT LEVELS (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Presentations and group work are important elements of assessment but they can cause some anxiety for students. Both of these approaches should be introduced early in a programme and gradually throughout it, with sufficient support and scaffolding, and increasing demands and sophistication.
- ▶ ‘Capstone projects’ towards the end of the programme have great potential to bring learning together and to provide an opportunity for students’ personal disciplinary interests to be accommodated. These projects can be among the most enjoyable and worthwhile for students.

## ASSESSMENT CONTEXTS AND DISCIPLINES

- ◎ Different assessments work better in different contexts and disciplines. Care should be taken to choose an assessment that is a good fit.
- ◎ High stakes summative assessment should not be used too early in any programme.
- ◎ Choosing the right kinds of assessment activity at the right stage is crucial for student success. Considering these decisions across a programme can contribute to coherence and efficiency.



- ◎ Assessment activities should be appropriate for the discipline taking into account signature pedagogies where signature pedagogies are the ways of teaching that fit well with particular subjects or disciplines.
- ◎ It is important to build confidence progressively throughout a programme and to gradually move to more challenging assessment formats which are reflective of the specialities of subject areas.



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