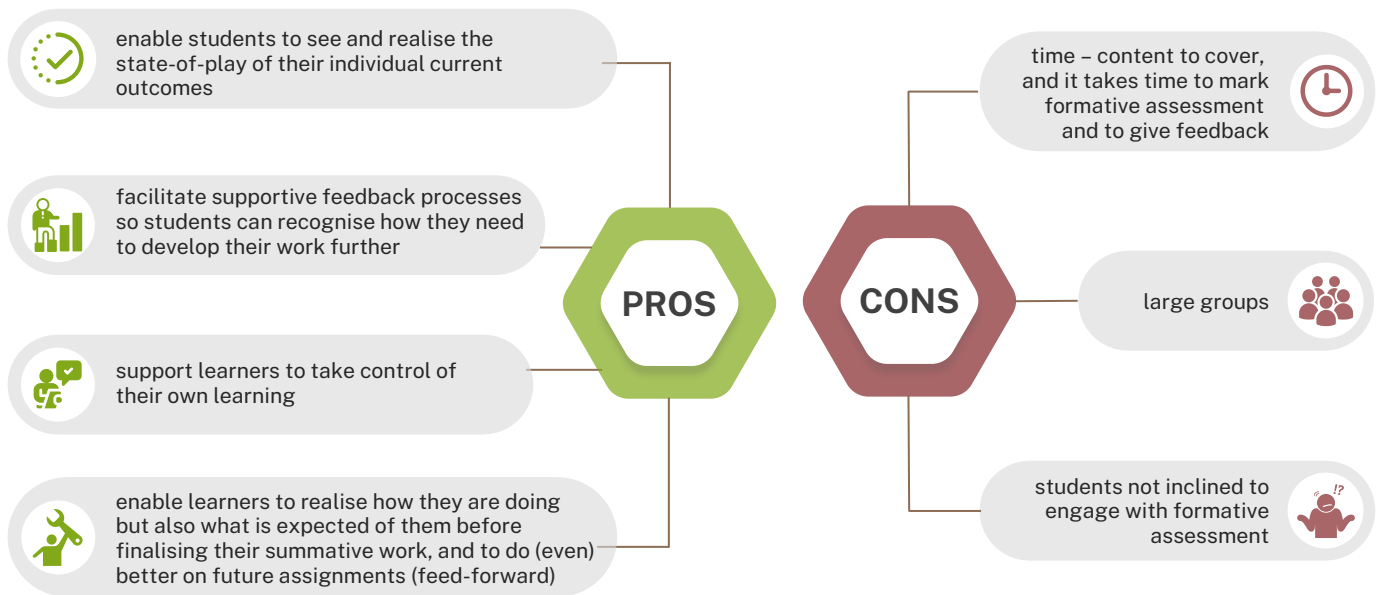


Formative assessment and feedback

Formative assessment or formative activities can help to prepare students for success before summative assessment. Formative assessment and feedback have many benefits but practically both students and staff may identify barriers to adopting these approaches.

Benefits and barriers to formative assessment



However, formative opportunities can make a dramatic difference to student learning and can be built into the learning activities in class as pre-emptive activities to save much of the work of feeding back on summative tasks. Some formative activities may involve the tutor, but others may include self-evaluation or peer review. (Sambell et al., n.d.).

Examples of formative opportunities which will enhance learning and save time might include:

- ▶ **Briefing students on assignment requirements** in a face-to-face session with plenty of time allowed for questions, in class and/or by anonymous digital means, from any students struggling to work out what they need to do. You might also **record briefing webinars** where you clarify the task and what exactly you expect students to do.
- ▶ **Preparing a set of 'Frequently Asked Questions'** to accompany your Assignment Brief, using your prior experience of what students often struggle to master, to pre-empt some of the most common errors and anxieties.





continued...

- ▶ Showing students on screen in face-to-face sessions some **examples of work of the required standard** immediately after briefing them on the assignment, so that they can see what you are looking for. By making these available in an impermanent form, you can reduce the possibility that students see these as ‘correct’ solutions to be emulated (or copied).
- ▶ Letting students see in class (or on the VLE) **worked examples of the kinds of problems** they are being asked to tackle with different variables from those in the actual assignment, so they can see how solutions are derived.
- ▶ **Asking students to submit bibliographies** to you prior to starting the main task including, say, three journal articles, one book chapter and four web sources they plan to use in their assignments, with annotations explaining how they found and selected these reference sources. Your comments, which can be given as group feedback, could prevent over-heavy reliance on dated sources, or Wikipedia, and may reduce plagiarism.
- ▶ **Running quizzes in class time** on the subject of the assignment, using ‘clickers’ or other audience response systems to help students to calibrate where they are with their learning.
- ▶ **Asking students to submit electronically strictly word-limited extracts of work** in progress for you to provide ‘quick and dirty’ comments individually to confirm that they are doing well, or to advise on different approaches as necessary.
- ▶ **Offering recorded, drop-in, virtual public ‘surgeries’** where students ask about their draft assignments: this way anything you say is shared with any other students.

References:

Sambell, K., Brown, S. and Race, P. (n.d.) *Giving formative feedback prior to submitting summative tasks*. Edinburgh: Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, Edinburgh Napier University. Available at: <https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dl/te/Documents/3%20Giving%20Formative%20Feedback%20Prior%20to%20Submission%20Quick%20Guide.pdf>



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