



Principle 5: Balancing skills, knowledge and self-development throughout assessment

What the principle means

Good assessment activities should help you gauge whether your students know, can do or have become what you promised in the programme learning outcomes, which is likely to include knowledge, skills and capabilities as well as professionalism in practice.



Questions to consider with your course team and students

- ✓ Are you confident that you have within your assessment activities a good balance of skills development and content knowledge?
- ✓ Do your assessed tasks include ones where students have to demonstrate ‘can do’ reliably (and not just as a one-off) as well as ‘know’?
- ✓ Is there ever an over-reliance on memorisation and recall alone in any part of your assessment diet?
- ✓ Where do students develop critical thinking? (Webster, 2020).

Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 5, as a team can you identify areas that you know to be priorities for enhancing your programme assessment and feedback strategy in the coming three years? All areas are important, but selecting too many can make genuine actionable proposals unachievable which is demoralising. Concentrate on what is feasible.



Once you have agreed on the priorities, you may wish to use the table overleaf to record your plans for enhancement under Principle 5.



Principle 5 worksheet - Balancing skills, knowledge and self-development throughout assessment

Principle focus	Specific actions you will take:	Responsible leader:	Help/resources needed to make this happen:	Milestones (timescale for implementation):	Performance indicators:
e.g. Critical thinking	e.g. Review of learning outcomes and assessment to identify where critical thinking is included	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module outlines and programme documentation Time to work as individuals and as a programme team 	e.g. One academic year	e.g. Identification of where critical thinking is included in module learning outcomes and aligned assessment



About this resource

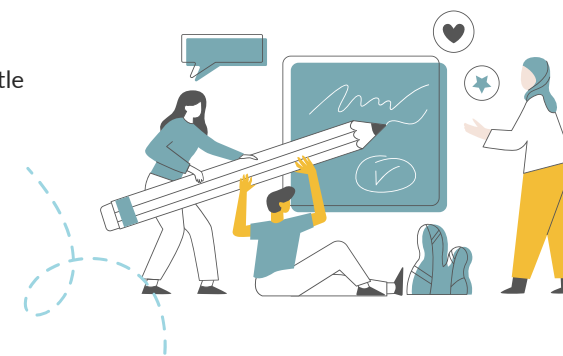
This resource is drawn from the *Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design* (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 5 – Balancing skills, knowledge and self-development throughout assessment'. The resource can be used by teams who wish to review how this principle is enacted in their work, and who wish to plan to enhance their practice regarding this principle. The resource can be used as a stand-alone thinking and planning tool for teams, as well as being considered in the context of the toolkit as a whole.

As part of the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' project, Professor Sally Brown and Professor Kay Sambell designed a toolkit for effective assessment design. This toolkit has been designed to provide course teams at Maynooth University with guidance on periodical review of their assessment and feedback practices, in support of student success. The toolkit involves twelve principles which were proposed by Brown and Sambell, and shaped and modified by the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Advisory Group. The toolkit is available at in the Maynooth University [Assess for Success Hub](#).

The principles and the toolkit taken as a whole set a substantial agenda for action, but Brown and Sambell stress that the toolkit can primarily help local teams to set short- and longer-term prioritised targets to enhance assessment by focusing on activities that would help to ensure that assessment tasks, assignments and feedback could fully contribute to student engagement and positive outcomes.

References:

Webster, H. (2020) *WDC explains it all in one slide: Higher Order Thinking: Critical Analysis*, Writing Development Centre Newcastle University. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqyJVotAOdo>



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