



## Principle 8: Including a balance of formative and summative assessment

### What the principle means

Summative assessment is principally concerned with summing up student achievement on programmes leading to marks and grades, often includes numbers and commonly is end point, whereas formative assessment aims to integrate assessment within the learning process to enable change and improvement, often foregrounds words of advice and encouragement rather than just numbers and is frequently incremental.



### Questions to consider with your course team and students

- ✓ Is there a reasonable balance between formative and summative assessment that enables students to understand assessment requirements, see how well they are progressing towards desired learning goals, and use feedback information on their performance to improve the quality of their work or learning strategies? (Henderson et al., 2019; Winstone and Carless, 2019).
- ✓ Have you planned in opportunities for students to derive feedback early enough within the module itself, to enable them to do something constructive with the information, leading to action on their part?
- ✓ Have you planned to make formative assessment fully part of the learning process, so that students can try things out in low stakes environments, accompanied by guidance and feedback which helps them understand what makes for good work in their subject?
- ✓ Are there any processes in your programme, such as asking students to maintain a progress file or reflective log, which encourage students to turn assessors' comments and the marks awarded into action plans with a formative purpose, thereby helping learners monitor their own progress systematically?

### Setting goals for assessment and feedback enhancement

Having reviewed and discussed Principle 8, 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 8.



# Principle 8 worksheet - Including a balance of formative and summative 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. Formative assessment	e.g. Formative assessment audit	e.g. Dr Jolanta O'Neill	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional learning on approaches to formative assessment.</li> <li>Time to work as a department team and with students.</li> </ul>	e.g. One academic year	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater knowledge of formative assessment.</li> <li>Records of discussions across team and with students.</li> <li>Documenting of where formative assessment is occurring and the approaches taken to it.</li> </ul>



## About this resource

This resource is drawn from the *Principles-based Toolkit for Effective Assessment Design* (Brown and Sambell). This resource focuses on 'Principle 8 – Including a balance of formative and summative 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.

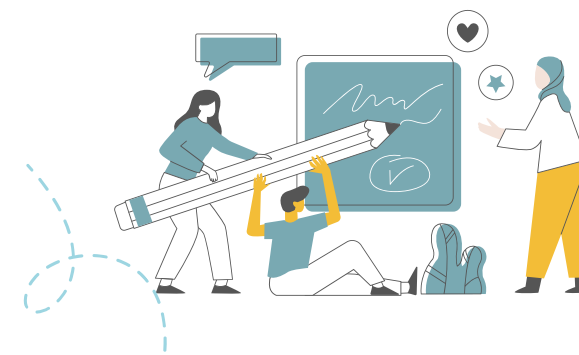
As part of the Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' project, Professor Sally Brown and Professor Kay Sambell designed a toolkit for effective assessment design. This toolkit has been designed to provide course teams at Maynooth University with guidance on periodical review of their assessment and 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:

Henderson, H., Phillips, M., Ryan, T., Boud, D., Dawson, P., Molloy, E., and Mahoney, P. (2019) 'Conditions that enable effective feedback', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 38:7, pp. 1401-1416, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2019.1657807

Winstone, N. E., and Carless, D. (2019) *Designing Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: A Learning-Focused Approach*. London: Routledge.



### How to cite this resource:

Brown, S. and Sambell, K (2022) *A principles-based toolkit for effective assessment design. 'Principle 8 - Including a balance of formative and summative assessment' worksheet*, Maynooth: Maynooth University.



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