**Assessment Literacy**

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**What is assessment literacy?**

Price et al. (2012), state that assessment literacy includes an awareness and understanding of:

* How [assessment and learning](https://sites.reading.ac.uk/curriculum-framework/assessment-for-learning/) are connected
* principles such as [reliability and validity](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/assessment-design/eia-constructive-alignment-in-assessment-design.aspx)
* assessment [techniques and methods](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/assessment-design/eia-constructive-alignment-in-assessment-design.aspx)
* assessment [criteria, standards and policies](http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/goodpracticeinteachingandlearning/assessmentandfeedback/cqsd-assessmentandfeedback.aspx)
* [feedback purposes and processes](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/efb-home.aspx)

Assessment literacy encapsulates how teachers and students understand assessments, their purpose, how they are measured etc. and thus have a better comprehension of both teaching and learning. Formative assessment is one of the main ways you can help your students become fully assessment literate.

Furthermore, the development of assessment literacy can also involve the acquisition of skills: [peer and self-evaluation](http://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/peer-and-self-assessment/eia-peer-and-self-assessment-main.aspx)and metacognition, i.e., conscious reflection on assessment techniques and methods.

**Why is it important?**

No one has perfect assessment literacy because we all have different interpretation or expectations from assessments. Price et al (2012, p.12) believe that assessment not only refers to the “measurement of student achievement” but also includes how we measure that achievement, the type of feedback we provide and assisting student learning through formative assessment. Students may not know what the teacher/marker wants. Different teachers and markers have different expectations. “Assessment practices involve communication between people who may have varying degrees of assessment literacy. It is important that there is common understanding of language used, but in reality, agreeing and interpreting common terminology is challenging” (Booth et al. 2014, p.138). Assessment literacy seeks to fill those gaps enabling students to progress in their learning utilising formative [feedback](http://www.reading.ac.uk/draft/efb-engage-in-feedback-home.aspx) and developing a clearer understanding of how this feedback relates to intended learning outcomes. To achieve this, it is important that academic staff are also assessment literate to ensure high quality design and application of assessments, and in order to model good assessment practices to learners.

**Assessment literacy for staff**

An equal understanding of assessment across all staff cannot be assumed. Professional judgement is valuable and academic standards cannot easily be made transparent but confidence in professional judgement would be enhanced by introducing consistent methods to share and safeguard these, often tacit, standards (The Higher Education Academy, 2012).

* Course teams need to build an understanding of how assessment is mapped across a course.
* They also need to build a shared understanding of the course graduate attributes, how these are assessed across the course and how progression ensured.

When considering how to develop staff assessment literacy, it is important to think about the needs ALL team members, new, established, sessional and part-time staff, research intensive staff etc. Everyone has their own perspective and interpretation and it is important that a standardised approach is reached. Advance HE (HEA, 2012, p.21) suggest:

“Although assessment standards provide a foundation for the process of assessment, they are not easy to express. To alleviate this, academic, disciplinary and professional communities might set up opportunities and mechanisms to regularly discuss assessment standards. Because consistent and effective assessment standards play a vital part in informing student learning, it is crucial that these are developed and maintained. The sharing and demonstrating of professional judgements related to assessment standards is the prime responsibility of discipline or subject communities”

[The HEA Assessment Review Tool](https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/hea/private/a_marked_improvement_1568036814.pdf) (HEA 2012, pp.22-37) also provides a useful template for departments/teams to rate how different aspects of assessment are planned and implemented.

Essentially, it is important not to work in isolation or in silos but to continually and consistently communicate, evaluate and make changes as needed including in response to data and feedback from the following sources:

* Power BI,
* Student Dashboard
* NSS
* student evaluation questionnaires
* staff/student liaison meetings
* Board of Study meetings
* Staff meetings
* Working groups

**Assessment literacy for students**

Strategies that require students to actively engage with assessment will result in deeper and longer-term development of assessment literacy.

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| **Building assessment literacy with students** | |
| **What can you do? How assessment literate are you?** | **Possible activities** |
| How do you know what your students’ current assessment literacy levels are? Do you have activities that you can use to ascertain this? | * Diagnostic tests so you can ascertain levels/abilities. These can be in multiple formats. * Open reflection task where students can list assessment types, they are familiar with and share concerns – can be done synchronously or asynchronously. |
| Do you use both formative and summative assessment on your modules/courses to help students understand what is expected of them? | * Formative assessments can give students experience of the assessment and the opportunity to get feedback before the final weighted summative assessment. These can be drafts, verbal feedback in a tutorial/lab/classroom/PAT meeting, initial attempts (sketches, reflections, short presentations) there are multiple options. * Formative assessment also gives students the opportunity to try out different approaches/techniques – e.g., get them to try using different reflective cycles, slowly incorporate a wider range of resources, do an annotated bibliography to get started on the research for an essay etc. |
| CCCU has clear requirements for the use of Turnitin to support students. However, this still needs support in how to interpret and use Turnitin similarity scores effectively. You should also encourage good academic practice, signpost to support like the [Learning Skills Hub](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-skills-hub) and help instil a sense of pride in your students over their work and achievements.  You can remind yourself of the CCCU requirements for the use of Turnitin [here](https://d.docs.live.net/8ab5a9d45963c184/Desktop/CCCU/Effective%20Assessment%20and%20Feedback%20EAF/University%20requirements%20for%20use%20of%20Turnitin%20|%20TEL%20Knowledge%20Base%20for%20Staff%20(canterbury.ac.uk)) | * Use mock or anonymised scripts with Turnitin highlights and help students to understand what Turnitin can be used for. * Ensure students know what good academic practice is and that they know how to reference, summarise, paraphrase and synthesise texts effectively to support their research rather than focussing on whittling down patches of highlighted text. * Ensure that students understand that there is no ‘acceptable’ percentage of similarity. |
| Do you engage students as partners in the review, selection and design of assessment? The more students are involved in assessment the more it gives them agency.  CCCU has a Partners in Learning Conference every winter as well as a Learning & Teaching conference and the Medway Festival – all of which are excellent forums to gain ideas. Find out more [here](https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-enhancement/excellence-scholarship-and-research/Conferences-Research-and-Excellence.aspx) | You can engage students through partnership in learning in a number of ways:   * Work on collaborative and active learning – flipped classroom activities where students choose the themes, research topics, reading. * Giving students a choice of assessment types so that they have some ownership. * Give students a voice, e.g., co-teaching or presenting, designing feedback/peer feedback tools, learning materials and resources.   (HEA, 2015) |
| Do you offer students opportunities to engage with assessment criteria and standards, the opportunity to participate in peer and self-assessment, and to understand how they can meet intended learning outcomes through formative assessment tasks? | * Put up exemplars or models so that students and get students to use rubrics to ascertain levels, good and less good practice – e.g., poor paraphrasing, highly descriptive writing, going off topic, presentations being too long/short etc. * Students can use peer feedback and even design their own peer feedback tools. * Encourage students to have a peer record them on their own device so that they can go back and evaluate performance/presentation etc. |
| Do you encourage communication between staff and students about assessment matters? | This could be achieved through:   * the provision of assessment exemplars with opportunity for students to pose clarification questions, * student-generated assessment FAQs uploaded to Blackboard/via a blog, wiki or discussion board * discussions between staff and students about assessment methods and expectations, and highlighting and discussion of key points from assessment reports (in class/SSLM/Board of Study etc.) |
| Do you use feedback effectively, e.g., feed forward feedback? | * Essentially this is to help students know how to improve on or build on work done in their assessment. Even if the assessment is summative they can have pointers to help them in the next module/year of study/post-study/in employment. * You can also get students to look back on feedback in a previous module. E.g., if they did a presentation in an earlier module and are preparing for a presentation on your module then that feedback could be more relevant to them at this stage because they are engaging in similar skills. |
| How do you introduce assessment to students?  Assessment tasks across the course should allow students to show progress as the subject knowledge and understanding (mastery of the discipline) become more complex and conceptually demanding whilst the context of assessment moves from familiar/more descriptive/simpler tasks in the early stages to decision making, critical analysis in more complex and unpredictable contexts in the final stages. | * Think about how the assessment task is introduced to the students. Just having details in a handbook or on your Blackboard is not enough to engage students or help them understand what they need to do. * Think about how are assessment standards and criteria explained – this could be covered in discussion, Q&A, peer-feedback, looking back at exemplars, etc. * Ensure that students know what formative activities will help them prepare for the summative assessment. * Consider where can you build in opportunities for dialogue with the students about the task. You could build in an assessment workshop/have discussion in tutorials/asynchronous discussion board etc. * Ensure that there are opportunities to identify areas students might need support in to complete the assessment successfully. For example, academic writing and referencing are areas students may need support in. It is best not to make too many assumptions about 'what students should know and be able to do'. Such assumptions may alienate and prevent students from asking for help. |

Adapted from: [Assessment Literacy – Curriculum Framework (reading.ac.uk)](https://sites.reading.ac.uk/curriculum-framework/assessment-literacy/)

**References**

Booth, B., Hill, M, F.,& Dixon, H., (2014) ‘The assessment-capable teacher: are we all on the same page?’ *Assessment Matters*. (6) pp.137-157. [AM2014\_6\_137.pdf (nzcer.org.nz)](https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/journals/assessment-matters/downloads/AM2014_6_137.pdf)

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Winstone, E, N., & Nash, R, A. (2016). [The Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/developing-engagement-feedback-toolkit-deft) [HEA - report](https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/hea/private/resources/the_developing_engagement_with_feedback_toolkit_deft_0_1568037353.pdf)

**Oxford Brookes University and The Higher Education Academy (HEA) (2014).**[Developing academic communication in assignment briefs to enhance the student experience in assessment. Supporting staff and students with assessment.](https://assignmentbriefdesign.weebly.com/)

Price, M., Rust, C., O’Donovan, B., Hindley, K. & Bryant, K. (2012). Assessment Literacy: The Foundation for Improving Student Learning. Wheatley: Oxford Brookes University.

**Further resources**

If you are interested in learning more about assessment literacy then you may be interested in the [Equity, Transparency, Agency (EAT) framework and its implementation](https://d.docs.live.net/8ab5a9d45963c184/Desktop/CCCU/Effective%20Assessment%20and%20Feedback%20EAF/(PDF)%20Evans,%20C.%20(2021).%20The%20EAT%20Framework.%20ERASMUS%20EAT%20(©Evans,%202021)%20Version%204%20of%20EAT.%20(researchgate.net)):

Evans, C. (2016) Enhancing assessment feedback practice in higher education: The EAT framework. Southampton: University of Southampton, UK.

The University of Sheffield site has useful practical examples:

[Assessment literacy - Assessment and feedback - Learning and teaching guidance - Elevate - Staff - The University of Sheffield](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/elevate/guidance/assessment-feedback/assessment-literacy)