

Blended Learning Quick Start Series: Engaging students using formative activities

Introduction

Formative activities can be a good way to both assess students' understanding while also encouraging engagement. They can also be used to identify areas of content where students may be struggling, allowing staff to develop further supporting content and activities to address such issues. If designed well, formative activities can help students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to manage and regulate their learning experiences.

As formative activities are low stakes and do not usually carry a grade, students may not necessarily see an immediate value to participating. When introducing a formative activity to your teaching, ensure that you carefully explain the rationale behind the activity and what you expect students to gain from the process. It's often useful to create a link between summative and formative activities so that engagement with formative tasks builds the skills, knowledge and confidence required for the summative task(s).

Formative activities can be easily embedded in both face-to-face and online settings using a range of tools within our [Learning Platform Suite](#).

Option 1: Pose questions using Mentimeter

[Mentimeter](#) allows you to pose questions quickly and easily for students to respond to in real-time using their web-enabled device (e.g., smartphone). With classroom response systems such as Mentimeter there are many strategies you can adopt, including quick polls to gauge comprehension, 'entry and exit' polls to measure and consolidate learning over time, group-based polling, leader boards, and peer feedback activities.

Option 2: Asynchronous tests in Blackboard

Asynchronous tests can be provided online to students through [Blackboard](#). Blackboard tests can be personalised with pre-populated feedback and advice based on the answers selected. Blackboard tests are a great way to help students prepare for summative assessments, enabling them to identify strengths and weaknesses early on.

Option 3: Digital peer review

Peer review is a great way to allow students to engage with both their learning and their classmates, providing them the opportunity to consider the work of others and how that might impact upon their own understanding. There are several ways in which peer review can be undertaken digitally, including the [PeerMark](#) functionality in Turnitin, idea walls in [Padlet](#), and [discussions](#) in Blackboard.

Option 4: Formative collective feedback

Pre-recording collective feedback using [ReCap](#) is a great way to engage students, highlight common issues, and share interesting practice quickly and easily with an entire cohort. Collective feedback is a great time saver for the teacher, and it can be reviewed by students in their own time.