Module 1

Assessment for learning in everyday lessons
Assessment for learning in everyday lessons

Objectives

• To identify the key features of assessment for learning in high-quality teaching and learning
• To identify strategies for improving assessment for learning

Resources

• OHTs 1.1–1.4
• Handouts 1.1–1.3
• Appendix 1.1, Background notes (photocopied and distributed to all participants before course begins)
• Video sequence for this module
• Flipchart and pens

Session outline

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Pre-course task

Participants should prepare for this module by reading appendix 1.1, Background notes. These clarify the relationship between assessment for learning and assessment of learning. The notes draw extensively from Inside the black box and Assessment for learning: beyond the black box. These publications summarise the findings of extensive research into Assessment for learning and are frequently referred to by researchers and other educationists who have an interest in assessment.
1.1 Introduction
Show OHT 1.1 to clarify the objectives of the session.

**Objectives**

- To identify the key features of assessment for learning in high-quality teaching and learning
- To identify strategies for improving assessment for learning

Say that the session should help everyone to:

- understand what assessment for learning means in the context of everyday teaching;
- appreciate the importance of making sure that, in every lesson, pupils understand what they are trying to learn and why;
- keep a sharp focus on the best use of assessment for learning strategies;
- extend the range of the practical strategies they use to develop assessment for learning.

Emphasise that all the other modules help to develop assessment for learning strategies.

1.2 Assessment for learning - definition and key characteristics

Remind participants of their pre-course reading (appendix 1.1, Background notes) and show OHT 1.2 to clarify the concept of ‘assessment for learning’.

**Assessment for learning - definitions**

- In this paper ... the term assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.

- Assessment for learning involves:
  - gathering and interpreting evidence about students’ learning, and
  - learners and their teachers using that evidence to decide where students are in their learning, where they are going and how to take the next steps.
  - QCA and the Assessment Reform Group (2001)
Make these points:

• The definitions of assessment for learning stress the importance of **actually using** the information gained.

• Inside the black box is a summary of the main findings arising from 250 assessment articles (covering nine years of international research) studied by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. It continues to help focus other research across the country and its findings are a touchstone for other researchers, advisers and teachers.

• To understand these definitions fully it is necessary to reflect upon the findings and key messages of the research which led up to them. (These are addressed in appendix 1.1, Background notes.)

Show OHT 1.3.

Make these points:

• Assessment for learning is different from other ongoing assessment. It involves more than marking and feeding back grades to pupils. It involves identifying the next steps for learning as well as having a clear understanding of the errors pupils make and the difficulties they experience.

• It requires finding effective ways of showing evidence of progress in learning and obstacles to learning.

• Two additions have been made to the original text.
  - ‘Peer assessment’ has been added to the fourth bullet point, 4 as the KMOFAP (King’s Medway Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project) research has identified peer assessment as a developmental step towards self-assessment.
  - ‘Information’ has been added to the last bullet point as the term ‘data’ is meant to be interpreted broadly. (‘Information’ has been substituted for ‘data’ in the rest of the module.)
1.3 Identifying effective teaching strategies for assessment for learning

Give out handout 1.1. (You are advised not to give out handout 1.2 yet.)

Ask participants to work in pairs. Ask them to list, in the ‘Teaching strategies’ column, some of the strategies that are routine practice in their department. One example is provided in each case to focus the discussion. (This has been found to be a challenging activity.)

- Allow up to 8 minutes for pairs to work on the lists.
- Emphasise that you are asking for strategies used in the context of a ‘normal’ lesson.
- Ask participants for some examples of effective teaching strategies, note them on a flipchart, and ask participants to explain how their strategies contribute to pupils’ learning. Try to draw out some of the examples of strategies which are included on handout 1.2 (which will be distributed later in the session).

1.4 Lesson video

The way this video sequence is presented to participants makes a significant difference to how well they are able to identify the assessment for learning strategies shown and their impact on learning.

The presenter should be familiar with the contents of the video and the guidance on the use of video recordings contained in the introduction to this training folder.

- Explain to participants that they should note examples of the strategies being used in the video, and their impact on learning, on handout 1.1.
- Point out that the excerpts from the lesson will only show some of the assessment for learning strategies employed. More would be evident if the whole lesson were observed. The proportion of teacher input versus pupil input is inevitably distorted.
- Provide the following information:
  - Langley School is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive school in Solihull with just under 1000 pupils.
  - The school serves a diverse community.
The video shows a Year 7 music lesson with a mixed-ability group. The class has some very able pupils as well as some with special learning needs.

The piece of music the pupils are shown listening to had to be edited down for the purpose of the video and was really about three times longer.

The video was filmed in mid-October and so the pupils have only been at this school for about six weeks.

- Explain that they needn’t start noting examples straight away (although some might choose to do so) as there will be a pause after a short while.
- Show the first part of the video until the first pause point and then allow a couple of minutes for participants to begin noting examples.
- Ask participants to continue adding examples, and restart the video.
- Stop at the second pause point to allow a couple of minutes for participants to add to their notes.
- Tell participants that the plenary which follows provides good examples of the impact of the teaching strategies on learning, and restart the video. It is also a good example of the benefits of paired discussion and ‘no hands up’ questioning.

1.5 Discussion of video

10 minutes

Allow participants another couple of minutes to complete their notes, then take feedback on the teaching strategies and their impact on learning as observed in the video. During the discussion draw out the positive impact of the strategies used. Record the main points on a flipchart.

Distribute handout 1.2, which provides examples of strategies used in the lesson observed and their impact on learning.

1.6 Departmental implementation

10 minutes

Distribute handout 1.3 and explain that it is taken from the Association of Assessment Inspectors and Advisers’ secondary assessment coordinators guidelines.
Relate the ‘Teaching strategies’ column to the participants’ feedback on the video and the prior discussion. Tell participants that communicating clearly the learning objectives to pupils (and how pupils can demonstrate achievement) underpins all the other assessment for learning strategies.

Bearing this in mind, ask participants to use this list to:

- select two or three of the ‘key characteristics’ in the list, which could be most usefully focused on to enhance teaching and learning in their department;
- complete the ‘Context’ column by giving an example of how each of the strategies may be applied in specific lessons with particular classes.

Participants may wish to focus on other strategies that have been raised in the session.

Take some brief feedback and say that departments should plan for effective use of these strategies.

### 1.7 Conclusion

5 minutes

Summarise the module. Make these points:

- The focus was placed on strategies such as the sharing of learning objectives with pupils, pupils’ peer and self-assessment and feedback to pupils to inform next steps in learning. This is because these are central to assessment for learning in everyday lessons.

- Good planning and teaching skills are crucial for making assessment for learning a familiar part of lessons.

- Assessment for learning can sharpen the focus of teaching and better direct it to meet the learning needs of pupils.

- ‘Rich’ assessment for learning lessons need to be routine and familiar to pupils.

- Using some of the strategies featured in the module will help pupils become equipped with the skills they need to be active learners and to contribute fully to assessment for learning.

- All of the other modules in the training folder are directly relevant to assessment for learning and help teachers develop assessment for learning teaching strategies.
1.8 Ready for more?  

Show OHT 1.4. Explain that it presents suggestions for further work.

- **Step 1**
  - Focus on one or two strategies you have identified on HANDOUT 1.3 and use them in a series of lessons.

- **Step 2**
  - After the first few lessons, discuss with a colleague what went well and what didn’t.

- **Step 3**
  - Consider what further support or training might be helpful.
  - (For example, look at the summaries of the other training modules to see if they are directly relevant.)
Background notes

Terminology

• Assessment of learning is also known as summative assessment.
• Assessment for learning is also known as formative assessment.

The change in language is helpful in clearing up the confusion about the nature and purpose of each type of assessment.

Assessment of learning

Assessment of learning tends to be summative and is carried out at the end of a unit or year or key stage. The teacher undertakes this kind of assessment to make judgements about a pupil’s performance. Conclusions will probably be reported in terms of grades, marks or levels. These may be set alongside national standards, so that a pupil, school or teacher can evaluate their own performance against that of others. They also allow schools to track progress over time.

Because the results of assessment of learning are shared with other people, issues of validity and reliability are paramount. There is also an important balance between making assessments that are rigorous and yet manageable.

It has become more and more important for school managers to explore and understand relevant assessment data. Subject leaders in secondary schools, for example, need to interpret the performance of the pupils they receive and how they progress. This can help them to identify trends, set realistic targets and identify the needs of pupils.

Assessment of learning is well established and there is now a broad consensus regarding its nature, summative purposes and importance. It is not always recognised, however, that by sharing expectations and targets with pupils, assessment of learning can contribute to assessment for learning. For example, pupils can be given experience of marking, moderating and also reviewing test papers in the light of performance.

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is formative in nature and takes place all the time in the classroom. Here are three useful definitions.

‘In assessment for learning, the learner’s task is to close the gap between the present state of understanding and the learning goal. Self-assessment is essential if the learner is to do this. The teacher’s role is to communicate appropriate goals and promote self-assessment as pupils work towards the goals. Feedback in the classroom should operate from teacher to pupils and from pupils to teacher.’


‘In this paper ... assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.’

‘Assessment for learning involves:

• gathering and interpreting evidence about students’ learning; and,
• learners and their teachers using that evidence to decide where students are in their learning, where they are going and how to take the next steps.’

QCA and the Assessment Reform Group (2001)

The key message is that assessment for learning depends crucially on actually using the information gained. Gaining information about pupils is only valuable if we then go on to do something with it for the benefit of the pupils.

**Inside the black box**

The publication Inside the black box is an influential pamphlet that summarises the main findings arising from 250 assessment articles (covering nine years of international research) studied by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. The document is well known and widely used, and acts as a touchstone for many professionals in the field of assessment.

Inside the black box identifies five deceptively simple key factors which improve learning through assessment:

• providing effective feedback to pupils;
• actively involving pupils in their own learning;
• adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;
• recognising the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial to learning;
• considering the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and to understand how to improve.

The research also identifies a number of risks with regard to assessment:

• valuing quantity and presentation rather than the quality of learning;
• lowering the self-esteem of pupils by over-concentrating on judgements rather than advice for improvement;
• demoralising pupils by comparing them negatively and repeatedly with more successful learners;
• giving feedback which serves social and managerial purposes rather than helping pupils to learn more effectively;
• working with an insufficient picture of pupils’ learning needs.

The publication concludes that good assessment for learning:

• is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part;
• involves sharing learning goals with pupils;
• aims to help pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for;
• involves pupils in self-assessment;
• provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them;
• involves both teacher and pupils reviewing, and reflecting on, assessment information.

Assessment for learning is something more than routine ongoing assessment involving marking and feeding back judgements. It is bound into next steps, looks forward as well as back, and is closely allied to forward planning.

Other research

The King's Medway Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP) was a study of Key Stage 3 teachers and pupils in mathematics and science. Pupils, including the most able, made significant gains in attainment. Pupils appreciated the time given to resolving misunderstandings and reported greater emphasis on understanding work and identifying future targets. For example, they were able to set useful questions, to devise and analyse their own mark schemes and undertake marking of each other's end-of-unit tests.

The following techniques were found to be useful:
• questioning;
• comment marking;
• identifying targets for improvement;
• self-assessment;
• peer assessment;
• devising test questions;
• analysing and devising mark schemes;
• feedback from tests.

Further reading


Assessment Reform Group (1999) Assessment for learning: beyond the black box. University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education


Websites
http://www.qca.org.uk/ca/5-14/afl/
http://www.aaia.org.uk

Contact details
Inside the black box can be obtained from King’s College, London. Telephone 0207 836 5454 ext 3189.

Assessment for learning: beyond the black box can be obtained from University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. Telephone 01223 369631.
Objectives

• To identify the key features of assessment for learning in high-quality teaching and learning

• To identify strategies for improving assessment for learning
Assessment for learning - definitions

‘In this paper ... the term assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.’


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• gathering and interpreting evidence about students’ learning; and

• learners and their teachers using that evidence to decide where students are in their learning, where they are going and how to take the next steps.’

QCA and the Assessment Reform Group (2001)
Assessment for learning - key characteristics

Assessment for learning:

• is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part;

• involves sharing learning goals with pupils;

• aims to help pupils to know and recognise the standards they are aiming for;

• involves pupils in [peer and] self-assessment;

• provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them;

• involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data [information].

Assessment for learning: beyond the black box,
Assessment Reform Group (1999)
Ready for more?
Next half-term ‘have a go’.

Step 1
Focus on one or two strategies you have identified on handout 1.3 and use them in a series of lessons.

Step 2
After the first few lessons, discuss with a colleague what went well and what didn’t.

Step 3
Consider what further support or training might be helpful.

(For example, look at the summaries of the other training modules to see if they are directly relevant.)
**Assessment for learning - key characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Examples in lesson observed</th>
<th>Impact on learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing learning objectives with pupils</td>
<td>Ensure objectives are expressed in language that pupils can understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping pupils to know and recognise the standards they are aiming for</td>
<td>Give pupils clear success criteria that relate to the learning objectives.</td>
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<td>Involving pupils in peer and self-assessment</td>
<td>Give pupils opportunities to talk about what they have learned, and what they have found difficult, using the learning objectives as a focus.</td>
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<td>Providing feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them</td>
<td>Provide oral as well as written feedback whenever possible.</td>
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<td>Promoting confidence that every pupil can improve</td>
<td>Encourage pupils to explain their thinking and reasoning within a secure classroom ethos.</td>
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<td>Involving both teacher and pupils in reviewing and reflecting on assessment information</td>
<td>Provide time for pupils to reflect upon what they have learned and understood, and to identify where they still have difficulties.</td>
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### Assessment for learning - key characteristics

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<tr>
<td>Sharing learning objectives with pupils</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Pupils:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• explains objectives;</td>
<td>• gain clear understanding of what they are to learn.</td>
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<td>• provides sheet with learning objectives for pupils to refer to;</td>
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<td>• questions pupils to check understanding;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• ensures teaching assistant is clear about objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping pupils to know and recognise the standards they are aiming for</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Pupils:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• explains success criteria;</td>
<td>• gain a clear understanding of the standards they are aiming for;</td>
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<td>• models success by providing examples of previous work;</td>
<td>• recognise features of good work.</td>
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<td>• ensures teaching assistant is clear about standards being aimed for;</td>
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<td>• teases out, through whole-class discussion, what is good about work presented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involving pupils in peer and self-assessment</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Pupils:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provides sheet with success criteria for pupils to refer to;</td>
<td>• assess progress they have made;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• ensures teaching assistant is clear about success criteria;</td>
<td>• identify how they can improve their work;</td>
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<td>• helps pupils interpret learning outcomes in the context of their own piece of music;</td>
<td>• act as critical friends.</td>
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<td>• provides opportunities for discussion so that pupils can comment on and improve their work;</td>
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<td>• provides time for pupils to reflect on what they’ve learned.</td>
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### Key characteristics of assessment for learning

| Providing feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them | Teacher:  
- questions pupils in groups about their work;  
- provides oral feedback;  
- builds on responses to help them take the next steps in learning;  
- works in partnership with teaching assistant;  
- in whole-class discussion uses examples of work to highlight how different aspects of composition can be improved. | Pupils:  
- see more clearly what they need to do next;  
- are able to discuss next steps with each other;  
- in whole-class discussion learn from each other how to improve. |
|---|---|---|
| Promoting confidence that every pupil can improve | Teacher:  
- provides positive and constructive feedback;  
- matches learning objectives to needs by pitching them at a level which challenges individuals;  
- celebrates success and sets appropriate targets;  
- works in partnership with teaching assistant. | Pupils:  
- remain engaged and on task;  
- gain satisfaction regarding their own progress;  
- have a sense that they can continue to improve. |
| Involving both teacher and pupils in reviewing and reflecting on assessment information | Teacher:  
- maintains continuous dialogue about progress being made;  
- frequently reminds pupils of learning objectives and success criteria;  
- works in partnership with teaching assistant;  
- balances teacher assessment with self- and peer assessment;  
- makes effective use of plenary for reflection – for example, ‘no hands up’ questioning and paired discussion. | Pupils:  
- reflect on learning;  
- focus on learning objectives and success criteria;  
- measure own progress and that of their peers;  
- take responsibility for their learning;  
- perform to a high standard and make good progress. |
### Assessment for learning - key characteristics

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| Sharing learning objectives with pupils      | • Share learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson and, where appropriate, during the lesson in language that pupils can understand.  
• Use these objectives as the basis for questioning and feedback during plenaries.  
• Evaluate this feedback in relation to achievement of the learning objectives to inform the next stages of planning. |         |
| Helping pupils to know and recognise the standards they are aiming for | • Show pupils’ work which has met criteria, with explanations of why.  
• Give pupils clear success criteria that relate to the learning objectives.  
• Model what it should look like. For example, exemplify good writing on the board.  
• Ensure that there are clear, shared expectations about the presentation of work.  
• Provide displays of pupils’ work, which show work-in-progress as well as finished product. |         |
| Involving pupils in peer and self-assessment | • Give pupils opportunities to talk about what they have learned, and what they have found difficult, using the learning objectives as a focus.  
• Encourage pupils to work/discuss together, focusing upon how to improve.  
• Ask pupils to explain the steps in their thinking (‘How did you get that answer?’).  
• Give time for pupils to reflect upon their learning.  
• Identify with pupils the next steps in learning. |         |
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| Providing feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them | • Value oral as well as written feedback.  
• Ensure feedback is constructive rather than positive, identifying what the pupil has done well, what needs to be done to improve, and how to do it.  
• Identify the next steps for individuals and groups, as appropriate. |         |
| Promoting confidence that every pupil can improve | • Identify small steps to enable pupils to see their progress, thus building confidence and self-esteem.  
• Encourage pupils to explain their thinking and reasoning within a secure classroom ethos. |         |
| Involving both teacher and pupils in reviewing and reflecting on assessment information | • Reflect with pupils on their work – for example, through a storyboard of steps taken during an investigation.  
• Choose appropriate tasks to provide quality assessment information (emphasis upon process, not just on the correct answer).  
• Provide time for pupils to reflect upon what they have learned and understood, and to identify where they still have difficulties.  
• Adjust planning, evaluate effectiveness of task, resources, etc. as a result of assessment. |         |