

Formative Assessment

Description







Formative assessment fulfills the “iterative processes of establishing what, how much and how well students are learning in relation to learning goals and expected outcomes in order to inform tailored formative feedback and support further learning.” (Gikandi et al., 2011, p. 2337). It is comprised of both feedback (external) and self-monitoring (internal). The goal of instruction should be to facilitate the transition from feedback to self-monitoring by teaching students to:

- Understand the learning goal
- Compare actual performance to learning goal
- Take action to close this gap

Why is this important?

Effective formative assessment can foster improvement in higher-order, deep learning. It can also foster equity in education by supporting diverse needs of learners, as instructors adjust their teaching to address learners’ identified gaps. As learners are invited to interact with the material, learning experiences become more engaging and valuable. In the transition from external feedback to internal self-monitoring, students become more active participants in their learning and equipped with self-regulation skills they can carry with them to improve their learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Implementation Examples

In-class polling		
Prior knowledge reflection questions		
Mid-assignment knowledge check questions		
Adaptive quizzing		
Low stakes concept practice in homework		
Building consensus in class discussion		
Peer review in writing tools		

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Sources: Black & William (1998), Gikandi et al. (2011), Manahan et al. (2021), Nicol and Macfarlane (2006), Sadler (1989), Schellekens et al. (2021)

Practical Applications

- ✓ Strive to make assessments authentic (both in the real world and within the discipline)
- ✓ Give students flexibility, autonomy, and diversity of types of activities to submit
- ✓ Give multiple forms of feedback—both analytical scoring and subjective measures
- ✓ Pair ongoing, concise feedback with opportunities for students to document learning
- ✓ Provide clear learning goals and rubrics to help guide student self-monitoring
- ✓ Incorporate peer assessments so students can practice self-assessment skills