Job Aid: Planning Formative Assessment

Step 1: Consider the 3 types of assessment side-by-side.

Type	Diagnostic Assessment (Prior Learning)	Formative Assessment (For Learning)	Summative Assessment (Of Learning)
Description	• No points • Prompts learner reflection • Informs planned curriculum	• No or low points • Provides learner with feedback • Informs current teaching strategies	• High-stakes points • Provides learner with grade • Informs future curriculum
Examples	Pre-class/pre-unit quiz, informal survey, conversation, KWL chart	Exit ticket, practice question, COMBANK, think-pair-share, polling, self test, role play	Unit quiz, midterm or course exam, project, paper, presentation, OSCE

Step 2: Select formative assessment activities that align with objectives.

Ask what type of knowledge or skill you'd like to measure (Knowles, 2020):

Knowledge or Skill Type	What: Content Knowledge or Academic Skills	How: Process Knowledge or Psychomotor Skills	Why: Critical Thinking or Self-Reflection Skills
Sample Objective Verbs	Define, describe, identify, match, select.	Apply, demonstrate, detail, perform, solve.	Critique, evaluate, justify, recommend, reflect.
Sample Formative Assessment Activities	Class polling, exit tickets, problem sets, D2L quizzes, directed paraphrasing, etc.	Guided practice, role play, labs, simulations, flow charts, mind maps, etc.	Cases, journals, board practice questions, essays, think-pair-share, TBL, etc.

Step 3: Provide these components along with formative assessment.

In order to gain the most benefits from formative assessment, it is essential to provide learners with (Guskey, 2007; Hanover, 2014; Nyquist, 2003):

1. Transparent learning objectives and/or performance targets.
2. Knowledge of correct results with related rationales.
3. Suggested actions and/or activities to help reduce noted performance gaps.
4. Future opportunities to demonstrate progress and/or growth.

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Step 4: Don't forget formative assessment of instruction.

End-of-course surveys provide no way to "course correct" with current learners. Soliciting informal, early feedback on teaching and making related adjustments (as appropriate) is one way to model practice-based learning and improvement while reinforcing that you care about learner experiences. Caution: If you collect feedback but don't put it into practice and don't explain why, it can breed resentment. Examples of formative assessment activities that could be used to provide informal, early feedback on instructional design and delivery include:

- Class polling or "thumbs up, thumbs down" activities
- Guided or open journaling
- Discussion forums or social media backchannels
- Prototyping and user testing
- Surveys, focus groups, or breakout rooms

References

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