

Tips for Formative Assessment in Lockdown

Background

During the CAS Virtual Showcase in the Summer term of 2020, the CAS Assessment working group, with support from the CAS Research working group, ran a number of activities. One of these activities was an investigation of Formative Assessment in Lockdown. This short document is a summary of the top tips developed by the educators engaged in this activity and is based on their experiences in schools.

Many of these tips are not assessment specific, rather they are generally about the challenges faced during teaching during lockdown, but the group found that without engagement there is no learning! As background, the group recognised that formative assessment in lockdown is the same as any formative assessment activity, we need to remember to:

- Identify the learning outcomes being assessed
- Share what we are looking for (the rubrics) of the assessment with learners
- Make the learning that we are assessing visible
- Include a means to provide feedback
- Ensure that there is a way to change the learning based on the outcome of the assessment

The tips have been grouped into four themes of communication, training, hardware and software, learning and feedback and strategic approach.

Families

Support families to be able to help their children engage with learning and assessment activities e.g. find out what training families need to help their children use technology, create or curate sets of help videos for families, run training sessions for parents, signpost assessment activities so that parents know what to expect, share great work with families.

Develop a whole school “remote learning” policy to engage and support families including the methods of communication to be used, the frequency of expected engagement etc¹.

Pupils

Motivate and support pupils to be able to engage with learning and assessment activities e.g. find out what hardware, software and support pupils have access to, create or curate sets of help videos, train pupils in using technology, teach pupils about how to work independently, contact pupils regularly, showcase pupils’ work, use synchronous events which require pupils to discuss or collaborate, combine synchronous and asynchronous

Engage pupils in assessment through

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- Facilitating self assessment by sharing rubrics of what is expected
- Enabling learners to show what they have learned (make the learning visible)
- Providing timely and sensitive feedback
- Enabling peer assessment e.g. through synchronous discussions or asynchronous commenting on other work based on rubrics

Praise of pupil work is especially important in remote learning contexts, praise, acknowledgement and celebration of pupils' achievement, e.g. through showcasing curated good, quirky and interesting work.

In combining synchronous and asynchronous teaching, some schools have incorporated at least one synchronous teaching activity per year group per week to help students have more structure to the week. However, every school will develop its own routines.

Develop a whole school "remote learning" policy to engage and support pupils including the methods of communication to be used, the frequency of expected engagement etc.

Teachers

Support teachers to be able to use technology in general and to be able to design online learning and assessment activities using the tools your school has chosen to use. E.g. find out what training is needed, provide professional development and support.

Those schools who have teachers who are confident and experienced in the use of digital technologies will be at an advantage. As these experts can help to train and support others and champion, lead or support decision making in developing remote policies and strategies.

Don't focus just on the technology, think about the pedagogy related to assessment. Accommodating the different rates and levels of pupil learning during remote teaching is very difficult and will need much thought.

Using multiple choice questions is popular, but make sure you carefully create (or find) quizzes which address a specific need matched to your teaching objectives. Also check that there is useful feedback that progresses the learning. Eedi (also known as Diagnostic Questions or Quantum)²³ provides sets of multiple choice questions on computing topics which can be grouped into quizzes. Creating multiple-choice questions can be tricky, for example it is useful to include distractors. More information about Eedi and creating multiple choice questions can be found on the Computing at School website⁴.

Some teachers have incorporated examiner comments from past papers in the automated feedback to online assessment activities which are based on past exam papers.

Check that teacher professional development and teaching and learning policies include dealing with remote learning.

² https://www.computingschool.org.uk/custom_pages/107-quantum

³ <https://eedi.com/>

⁴ https://www.computingschool.org.uk/custom_pages/107-quantum

Schools/ Infrastructure/tools

Create a strategy for remote learning this could include products such as Showbie⁵, Show my Homework⁶, Google Classroom⁷, Microsoft Teams⁸. In emergency situations, though there may be pressure to rush to do this but if you can introduce changes incrementally. Safeguarding and GDPR requirements must be met. However, different schools are meeting these in different ways, evaluate the best approach for your setting.

Choose a small set of tools that meet the needs of your pupil community. Don't overload your pupils, families or teachers. Include a place to showcase pupils' work. If possible, choose software which can include feedback. Include a platform or integration with your existing admin system which allows for mass contact and general admin, such as Edulink/ links with SIMS etc is very useful

Capitalise upon the momentum generated by the enforced use of remote learning to develop policies, increase teacher, pupil and family confidence and expertise.

⁵ <https://www.showbie.com/>

⁶ <https://www.teamsatchel.com/products/smhw.html>

⁷ https://edu.google.com/products/classroom/?modal_active=none#%2Fready-to-go

⁸ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/education/products/teams>