

**Bournemouth
University**

FLIE

Centre for Fusion Learning
Innovation & Excellence
Bournemouth University

Promoting Assessment Literacy pocket guide





What is Assessment Literacy and why is it important?

BU has been recognised for delivering high quality teaching, learning and outcomes for students, and excellent teaching and pedagogic innovation continue to be key themes in the BU Strategic Plan (BU2025).

BU promotes assessment for learning and has developed policies and resources to embed this principle, including the BU Assessment & Feedback Toolkit and the Principles of Assessment Design policy document (6c).

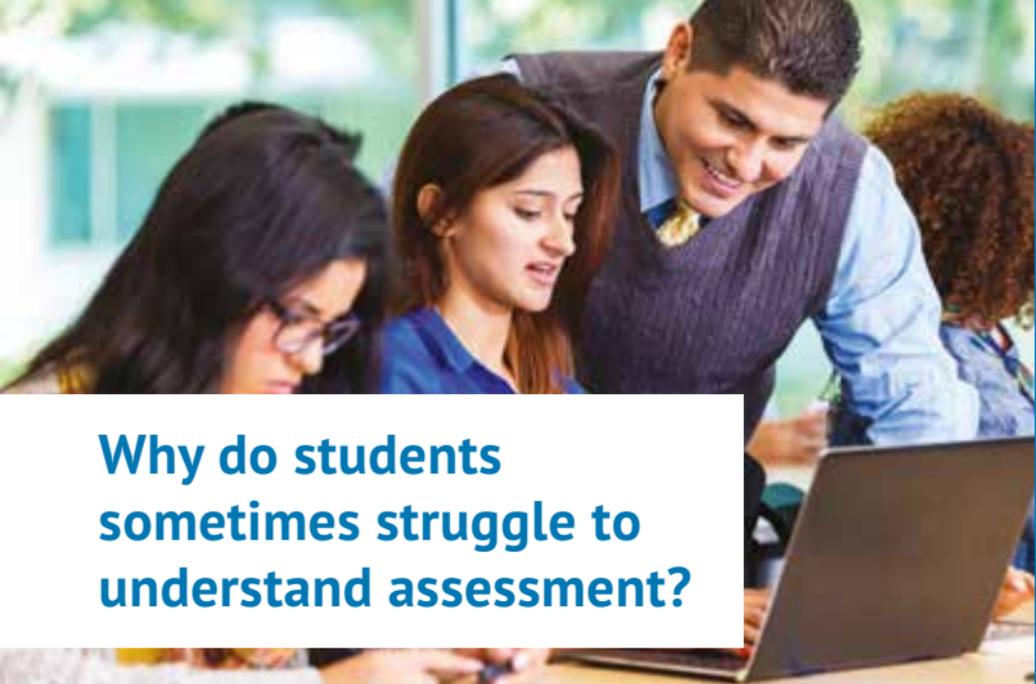
What is Assessment Literacy?

Assessment Literacy is not a new idea. In 2007 Boud and Falkinov promoted the view that for students, developing and demonstrating the ability to make judgements about their own work and about the work of others are important graduate attributes and employability skills.

For staff and students, Assessment Literacy includes a sound knowledge and understanding of:

- The connectedness of assessment and learning
- Assessment principles such as reliability, transparency, fairness and validity
- Assessment techniques and methods
- Assessment criteria, standards and policies
- Feedback purposes and processes.

(Price et al. 2012)



Why do students sometimes struggle to understand assessment?

Students come to BU from diverse educational background and cultures and need help to understand lecturer expectations and develop confidence in producing good quality assessments.

Students who do not understand the standards they need to reach on a programme can dramatically underperform. Students report that they don't know what 'the rules' are nor do they understand 'the rules' of how assessment in higher education works.

There are some easy ways to help your students by:

- Designing assessments that are clearly aligned with the Intended Learning Outcomes of the unit and enable the students to apply learning to 'real-world' situations. In the literature this is often referred to as 'authentic' assessment.

- Providing clear assignment briefs at the start of the unit - these can be co-created with students to ensure clarity. Whilst you are a subject expert immersed in the culture and language of your discipline, students may be encountering this subject and the concepts and language associated with it for the first time.
- Providing a year planner of assessment dates for the academic year ensuring where possible that assessment points are appropriately spaced to enable students to build on previous feedback and feedforward comments, and to avoid bunching of hand-in dates.
- Providing formative learning activities that support the assignment tasks, reinforcing learning and identifying misunderstandings or gaps early.
- Familiarising yourself and students with the BU Generic Assessment Criteria (Policy 6f) for the level of study and attaching the rubric when marking, in addition to providing assignment-specific constructive feedback/feedforward comments.
- Using examples of a range of previously completed assignments, or extracts from them, in order to give students practice in reviewing assessment criteria and identifying the standard of work expected for a range of mark bands.
- Setting up peer review of draft assignments as a formative activity.
- Embedding formative assessment activities in the teaching schedule, for example to reinforce threshold concepts.

Assessment for learning cycle



Source: Sambell K. 2011.

Some activities to support assessment literacy

1.Guided Marking

This can be done using the Virtual Learning Environment (Brightspace) or face-to-face in class in small groups.

Choose some assignments from a previous year, and with permission of the authors, anonymise and upload to Brightspace. It is useful to do this early in the programme of study.

Students use the Generic Assessment Criteria to comment on and possibly grade the assignments. In class or in seminars discuss the comments and grades and clarify what is valued in assignments of this type. Post a summary to Brightspace for students to refer back to.

2.Peer Review

This can be done using the Virtual Learning Environment (Brightspace) or face to face in class in small groups.

Ask students to produce a draft assignment (in a format suitable for the assignment task). In groups invite students to read and comment on each others work.

In class or in seminars discuss the comments and clarify what is valued in assignments of this type. Post a summary to Brightspace for students to refer back to.



Activities to support assessment literacy (continued)

3. Peer Assessment

Once students have had practice in peer review and have developed skills of giving good feedback and become familiar with the Generic Assessment Criteria they can be invited to undertake peer assessment. It is best to do this with low stakes/low risk assessment. This might be where peer review is worth a small proportion of marks, or in the first year of the programme.

Clear guidance and robust moderation is important to enable students to feel confident that their work is being assessed fairly.

4. Collaborative Assessment Design

Once students have developed skills in peer review and have a good understanding of standards expected, they can become involved in reviewing and designing assessment tasks and developing assessment criteria (assignment specific criteria in addition to the Generic Assessment Criteria).

Four areas for supporting students to develop assessment literacy

(Price undated)

1. Taking a programme perspective

Assessment practices should be embedded in curriculum design with activities and resources to promote assessment literacy taking place early in the programme. Price (2012) advocates a social constructivist approach with learners actively engaged in assessment processes.

2. Pre-assessment activity

To enable learners to monitor the quality of their work as they produce it they ideally need to see examples of a range of previous work to be able to see what a completed assignment in a range of mark bands might look like, and to better understand standards and quality. This may not be appropriate or possible for every assignment.

3. During assessment activity

Providing feedback/feedforward comments on drafts as part of required formative learning activities, either by the lecturer, or peers, or by designing self-assessment activities can develop confidence in making judgements about their own work.

4. Post-assessment activity

Understanding and using feedback is fundamental to developing academic and subject skills. By making the feedback relevant and developmental, learners are more likely to make use of it.

References

Boud D and Falkinov N .2007. *Rethinking assessment in Higher Education: Learning for the longer term.* Abingdon: Routledge

Price M. undated. *Promoting Students' Assessment Literacy.* Wise Assessment Briefing no 7. University of Hong Kong.
<http://cetl.hku.hk/wise-assessment-forum>

Price, M. et al. 2012. *Assessment Literacy: The Foundation for Improving Student Learning.* Wheatley: Oxford Brookes University,

Sambell K. 2011. *Rethinking feedback in higher education: an assessment for learning perspective.* Bristol: Escalate/HEA

Academic policies

Principles of Assessment Design Policy document (6c)
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/pandptest/6c-principles-of-assessment-design-policy.pdf>

Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation:
Policy and Procedure (6d)
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/pandptest/6d-marking-independent-marking-and-moderation-policy-and-procedure.pdf>

Assessment Feedback and Return of Assessed Work: Policy
and Procedure (6e)
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/pandptest/6e-assessment-feedback-and-return-of-assessed-work-policy-and-procedure.pdf>

Generic Assessment Criteria Policy document (6f)
<https://intranetsp.bournemouth.ac.uk/pandptest/6f-generic-assessment-criteria-procedure.pdf>

Further resources and reading

Cook-Sather, A. C., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. 2014. *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Evans, C. 2013. *Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education*. *Review of Educational Research*, 83(1), 70-120.

Harland, T., McLean, A., Wass, R., Miller, E., & Nui Sim, K. (2015). *An assessment arms race and its fallout: high-stakes*

Nicol, D. 2010. *From monologue to dialogue: Improving written feedback in mass higher education*. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 35(5), 501 -517

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Deeley, S. J., & Bovill, C. 2017. *Staff student partnership in assessment: Enhancing assessment literacy through democratic practices*. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(3), 463-477.

McDowell, L. 2012. *Programme-focused assessment: A short guide*. *PASS, the national teaching fellowship scheme*. Retrieved from: www.pass.brad.ac.uk/short-guide.pdf

O'Neill, G., Donnelly, R., & Fitzmaurice, M. 2013. *Supporting programme teams to develop sequencing in higher education curricula*. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19(4), 268-281

Sadler, D. R. 2010. *Beyond feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal*, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(5), 535–550.

Find out more:



Visit the FLIE website:

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/our-people/centre-fusion-learning-innovation-excellence



Visit the FLIE blog:

<https://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/flie/>

Visit the Assessment & Feedback Toolkit:

<https://staffintranet.bournemouth.ac.uk/aboutbu/professionalservices/flie/assessmentandfeedbacktoolkit/>

Have a question, comment or suggestion? Please get in touch with:

Anne Quinney, Principal Lecturer, FLIE



aquinney@bournemouth.ac.uk

Want to find out more about using technology-enhanced learning tools in Assessment & Feedback?

Please get in touch with the **Learning Technology team** and visit the **BU Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) Toolkit**:

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/our-people/centre-fusion-learning-innovation-excellence/tel-toolkit