

supported, in summary form, by a list of criteria (see section 1.8) will be most appropriate. If the assessment is meant to be summative (e.g. at the end of a course, a term or a year), some form of number or letter grade may be required.

STEP 6: Try out the task on a representative group of learners.

This process is often referred to as piloting the task / assessment. If you are building up a bank of assessment items that will be reused, rather than a one-off task, then it is important that you try out the task, and get feedback on how well it works.

There is one further step we need to take before the process is complete. Can you think what it is? We will come to Step 7 in section 1.11 below.

Reflect

Either by yourself or with a partner:

Select one or two learning targets and objectives at KS3 and have a go at developing an assessment task following the first three steps above.

1.8 Criteria for assessing learner performance

Performance criteria are a crucial part of an assessment procedure or item. These criteria need to be keyed to the important learning outcomes. In other words, they need to reflect those learning targets that the task has been designed to assess. At the same time, the criteria should be couched in terms that are understandable to the learners, and, where feasible, the criteria should be developed collaboratively with the learners. Criteria should address a number of aspects of performance. When assessing a group oral presentation, for example, the criteria would include:

- linguistic accuracy;
- fluency;
- presentation style;
- content; and
- collaboration with others.

Criteria can be relatively simple or quite elaborate. The simpler the criteria, the easier they are to use. However, more elaborate criteria provide more detailed and complete information on the learner.

1.9 Means of providing feedback to learners

Feedback can take many shapes and forms from quantitative feedback in the form of marks and grades through to qualitative feedback from the teacher. The form it takes will depend much on the purpose of the feedback which, in turn, will depend on the purpose of the assessment.

Reflect

Given the 6 different purposes for assessment identified by Brindley (2001), which do you think lend themselves to quantitative feedback and which to qualitative feedback? Why? Are there instances where you would want / need to give both types of feedback?

	Quantitative	Qualitative
<i>Certification</i>		
<i>Selection</i>		
<i>Instructional decision-making</i>		
<i>Accountability</i>		
<i>Diagnosis</i>		
<i>Motivation</i>		

Most teachers are very familiar with providing quantitative feedback in the form of grades or numbers. Such feedback ranks learners in relation to one another. It is necessary if you need to place learners in appropriate classes/levels. It does not, however, help learners know where their strengths and weaknesses lie, nor does it help them improve. In fact, such feedback may be demotivating for learners as they are unlikely to see any improvement, especially within a short period of time. It is therefore necessary to provide learners with qualitative feedback which they can understand and react to. This is especially important in formative task-based assessment which focuses on learners' attainment of specific targets and objectives.

Qualitative feedback needs to reflect the focus of a given assessment task. It may take the form of comments at the end of a written assignment, a feedback sheet presented to each learner, for example, after they have completed an oral presentation or a conference with a learner or group of learners. We discuss some options here, but we shall return to the issue of feedback in Units Two and Three.

1.9.1 Conferencing

Conferencing is a way for teachers and learners to communicate about individual or group learning needs and for teachers to provide feedback on how well learners are understanding or applying what they have learned. It is important that conferences with learners are focused and that a record is kept of the conference. Conferencing will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.5.3.

1.9.2 Observation sheets

While learners are working on tasks you may wish to monitor what they are doing using an observation sheet. This will help you find out what is actually going on in the class and to organize your feedback to your class. You may want to observe a single learner, a group of learners or the whole class. You may want to collect information about specific difficulties that are common among the learners or determine what further guidance you should provide in order to help learners complete the tasks successfully. The purpose of your observation will determine (1) what your observation sheet looks like and (2) whether you design it in a way to give to the

learners at the end of the observation or whether you synthesize your observations at a convenient point in the lesson. Just as the conference record may be more or less open-ended, the observation sheet may be open-ended or based on a checklist which you tick off during the observation time. The use of observation sheets will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.5.1.

1.9.3 Journaling

Learners can be required to keep records of their own progress in the form of a journal. If you use this procedure, however, it is important that you respond to what each learner writes. Journaling is meant to be a form of “written conversation” between you and your learners. In addition to acting as a record of what learners have learned, it can provide you with qualitative feedback on the processes of learning, what learners enjoyed / found engaging, etc. It can also be an extremely useful tool for self assessment (see section 2.6.2).

1.10 The role of the learner in the assessment paradigm

In addition to teachers, learners, too, have an active role to play in assessments that are designed for learning. Both self and peer assessment can facilitate learning.

1.10.1 Self assessment

Traditionally, it has been accepted that learners have little say in the assessment process; that teachers or external assessment bodies design, develop, implement and grade assessments and that the learners’ role is simply to complete the assessment tasks as set. In other words, learners’ involvement in the assessment process has been very limited. This view of assessment is changing and as learners are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, they are also beginning to play a more active part in their own assessment.

Reflect

What do you see as the benefits of involving learners in the assessment process?

One way of involving learners is to encourage them to self-assess their performance on assessment tasks. Such self evaluation has learners think about how well they did on a task and match their performance against the assessment criteria used to judge them. This process helps them understand the learning objectives they are trying to meet as well as the grading criteria being used to assess them. It makes the whole assessment process more transparent and at the same time encourages learners to become more self-critical.

Learners need to be trained to self-assess their own performance. When first introduced to self assessment it is likely that their own assessment will not match that of the teachers, but both parties will move closer together given time and practice.