

Reflect

How does formative assessment compare to summative assessment on the stakes continuum?

Formative assessment is of lower stakes than summative assessment. However, the former is important for learners to succeed in summative assessment.

Reflect

What are the similarities and differences between formative and summative assessment?

3.2 Considerations in designing summative assessment tasks

As with any assessment, when designing summative assessment tasks, it is necessary to consider the purpose of the assessment. The questions you must ask yourself include:

- Why am I giving this assessment?
- What will I do with the results of the assessment?
- How will I give feedback to the stakeholders involved?

Once you have established a clear purpose, then you need to scrutinize the learning / teaching programme to select the elements of language that you want to assess and determine the task types you will use to assess these. The process of selection is a difficult one as it often turns out to be a balancing act. You need to ensure adequate coverage of material without undue emphasis being placed on those elements of language which are easier to assess. At the same time you need to make the assessment practical in terms of length of the time it will take to devise and complete, the resources required to complete it and the effort involved in marking it and providing relevant feedback, etc.

Reflect

The following points were identified as considerations when developing formative assessment tasks. Indicate which you consider are similar when developing summative assessment tasks. For those you consider different, say how and why they are different.

- *identify the specific learning tasks and objectives you want to assess*
- *set specific aims, i.e. decide what the aims of the task are*
- *consider the type of assessment task appropriate to your aims*
- *design / modify a task to meet your assessment aims*
- *identify criteria by which the task will be judged*
- *develop a feedback mechanism to use for the assessment*

The first five points listed above should be considered for developing any type of assessment tasks regardless of whether they are formative or summative. The way you give feedback, however, may be somewhat different. Once you have selected the general criteria by which task performance is to be assessed and then modified the criteria so that they match the specific task requirements, you will need to relate those task-specific criteria to bands / levels of performance. This will enable you to give feedback to your learners in terms of where they stand and what standard they have reached.

There are a number of other factors that you need to bear in mind when designing assessment tasks. These include ensuring that:

- the tasks are of an appropriate level of difficulty for the learners;
- the prompt / instructions are not more difficult than the tasks themselves;
- the instructions to learners are clear; and
- the tasks selected do not bias in favour of any particular group of learners.

As suggested in Unit Two, developing assessment tasks and procedures should be a collaborative activity. This is particularly important when the same assessment is to be used for groups taught by different teachers. If an assessment is for all Secondary Two students, for example, then all the teachers involved in teaching those students should provide input in designing the task and the marking scheme. They should also be involved in a process of moderation so that there is consistency in applying the agreed assessment criteria.

Reflect

Brainstorm, preferably with a partner or in a group:

Are all school-based summative assessments of equal stakes? If not, what factors do you think determine the stakes of the assessment? In what ways do the assessments differ?

3.3 Criteria for evaluating summative assessment tasks

Reflect

Once you have administered a test / examination, how do you evaluate it?

How learners perform on the assessment you have devised and administered is an important source of information. An analysis of responses will enable you to identify which tasks elicited the responses you were anticipating. However, this is not the only source of information, nor is it infallible. You also need to observe the learners as they complete the assessment and find out from the learners where they encountered