

At a Glance: Formative Assessment Best Practices and Tools

The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Formative Assessment: An ever-changing road map to mastery

Formative assessments are a way of gauging student learning for the purpose of informing instruction and providing timely feedback to both students and instructors. It is an ongoing process in which the goal is working toward mastery of a skill or knowledge rather than pass/fail. These kinds of assessments can show strengths and weaknesses in students' understanding of a lesson or activity thereby helping an instructor decide whether a concept is mastered or whether it needs to be covered again. It also serves as feedback for the student to help them determine where they need to improve in order to achieve mastery. It can be anything from a verbal comprehension check to feedback on a rough draft. The idea is that the instructor gets to see where the student is on a concept and the student gets feedback on how to improve before their performance counts against them.

Best Practices

Feedback

In order to benefit students the most and to provide the most accurate picture of their progress feedback should be:

- Frequent
- Timely (before the next time they perform a task requiring the assessed skills)
- Specific (What did they do particularly well? What specific change could they make that would make the most impact on their level of mastery? If possible, provide an example of what that change would look like.)
- In reference to a well-articulated rubric (Providing a rubric that gives detailed expectations will make your feedback routine easier and more efficient because you can refer students to the level of the rubric that is representative of their work.)

Learning Outcomes

- Consider the order in which skills need to be constructed in your course and create a formative assessment plan which evaluates whether students have sufficiently mastered foundational skills to move on to the next skill.
- Make sure students know what you're assessing and why.

Formative Assessment Ideas

Have students:

- Write a rough draft and then self- or peer- assess followed by instructor feedback

- Answer poll questions during the lesson to gauge comprehension
- Write a one-sentence summary at the end of the lesson
- Take turns verbally paraphrasing concepts throughout the lesson

Tools for Formative Assessment

Polling Tools

- Poll Everywhere
- Slido
- Zoom poll questions

Comprehension Check Tools

- Google Forms
- Blackboard Tests

Feedback Tools

- Blackboard Inline grading tools and rubrics

Peer Editing Tools

- PeerStudio

Collaborative Comprehension Check Tools

- Google Jamboard
- Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Whiteboard
- Padlet

Competitive Review Tools

- Quizlet Live
- Kahoot
- Socrative