



ASSESSMENT

UCD Assessment ReDesign Project:
The Balance Between Assessment FOR
and OF Learning

Author: Geraldine O'Neill

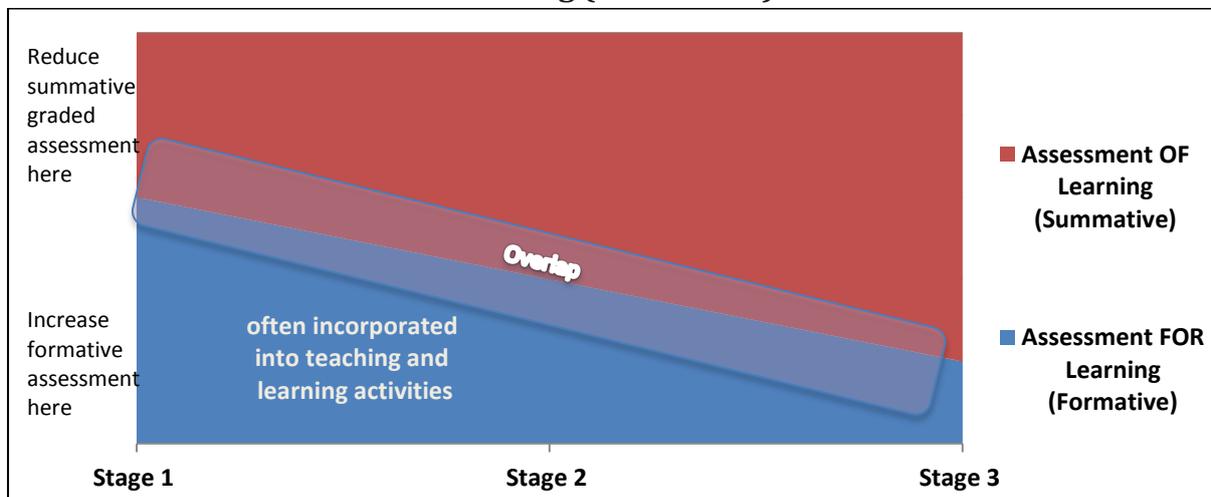
Email: geraldine.m.oneill@ucd.ie

Date: 15th October 2012

Assessment *OF* learning is 'summative', i.e. its main purpose is to grade and certify students' achievement, while Assessment *FOR* learning is 'formative', aiming to support and advance students in their learning¹. This can also be described as Assessment *As* Learning. 'Balancing assessment *of* and assessment *for* learning well, it is argued, is a key aspect of an **integrative** approach to enhancing assessment, i.e. one which brings the many and various strands of assessment together in a coherent way that addresses the desired goals and takes account of opportunities and constraints in the setting concerned¹.

The distinction between these purposes of assessment can 'overlap' (See Figure 1) and they are not always mutually exclusive. For example, some assessments *FOR* Learning (formative), whose primary function is for support/ feedback, can have some low weighted (low-stakes) grades, such as grades for engaging and participating in this activity. In addition, some Assessment *OF* Learning (summative) whose primary function is for grade and certification may also have a feedback component to it, for example, a mid-semester essay.

Figure 1: Balance across the Stages of Assessment *FOR* (Formative) and *OF* Learning (Summative).



As students in the early stages of a programme are introduced to new ideas and new ways of thinking, they need multiple opportunities to learn through trial and error, get feedback² and self-monitor² their performance (Assessment *FOR* Learning, UCD 1st Year Assessment Design Principles 1 and 2³). Before student exit the programme, staff need to be able have evidence that students have achieved the required learning to progress

to the next stage (*Assessment OF Learning*). There is a need to have assessment *FOR* and *OF Learning* in all stages of the programme, however, as in Figure 1 above, *Assessment FOR Learning* should have a higher weighting in Stage 1. ^{2,4}.

In association with an increase in *Assessment FOR learning* in Stage 1, there is potential to reduce⁵ some *Assessment OF Learning* (summative graded assessment). Reducing assessment overload for staff and students is key design principle in UCD's *Assessment ReDesign* project (UCD 1st Year Assessment Design Principle 6³). Some additional characteristics of *Assessment FOR Learning* (Formative):

- It strongly overlaps with teaching and learning activities, i.e. assessment is not seen as separate (Table 1 sets out some ideas for incorporating *Assessment FOR Learning* into 'in-class' and 'out-of-class' activities);
- There is an emphasis on feedback to the students on their learning, either before, during or after assessment;
- There is an attempt to develop students' ability to self-monitor and judge their own performance;
- There is an emphasis on students also learning from other students, i.e. their peers.

Table 1: Some Suggestion for 'Assessment FOR Learning' for both in-class, on-line and out-of-class activities

	Context	Assessment FOR Learning
1	In-class	<p>In-Class Quizzes/Problem Sheets:</p> <p>Develop quizzes/problem sheets for groups of students in class, where they can learn from other students and monitor their progress against others</p>
2		<p>Formative MCQ's in Class:</p> <p>Similarly, attempting MCQ's in class will assist students learn by giving feedback to them on their progress. Some low weighted marks can be considered for 'participating'.</p>
3		<p>One-minute Test³:</p> <p>Stop class 5 minutes before the end (or at beginning) asking: What the most important think you have learned? What important questions are unanswered?</p>

UCD TEACHING AND LEARNING/RESOURCES

		Use result to adapt next lecture, clarify questions in next session. Some low weighted marks can be given for participation in this activity.
4		In-class Peer and Self review of Work against Set Assessment Criteria²: Working with existing assessment criteria for assignment/project, in class get students to assign a grade to a mock or previous assignment answer. Discuss differences in grades. This highlights expectations for the assessment for the student. It highlights their gaps before their assessment.
5		In-class Holistic Assessment of student Work⁸: Develop students' judgment of their work as a whole; against their peers work on same assignment; against a wider spectrum of work. Discuss justification and any emerging 'latent' criteria.
6		In-Class Discussions: Allow opportunity for quick in-class discussion in pairs on more complex material or discuss the application of the material to their programme.
7		Using Student Generated On-line Material for In-Class Discussion If students contribute on-line prior to a class, use some of their material/questions to refer to in the lectures. Address common misconceptions, errors, etc.
8		In-Class Feedback on Assignment/Assessment: Give feedback to whole class on common errors in continuous assessment assignments (or previous years exams)
9	On-line	On-line Formative MCQ's (set by students) (PEER-WISE[©] software⁷) Get students to create, share, evaluate and answer their own MCQ questions. Students learn from each other on-line and realise what is a good question and good answer.
10		Problem-solving Activities : Use established or create on-line problem solving activities. Students can attempt these multiple times to get correct answers and as such learn from the process. Grade can be given for participation.
1		On-line Formative MCQ's (set by staff) with feedback:

UCD TEACHING AND LEARNING/RESOURCES

1		Similar to in-class, use MCQ's as a learning resource, where students attempt these as often as possible and gain grades for participation. Design automated feedback into the resource.
1 2		<p>Participation in Discussion-threads/Bloggs³:</p> <p>Set up either groups or individual blogs and ask students to discuss or answer certain questions. Give students some grades for contribution and additional marks for commenting on other students contributions. Examples and criteria are available for this (contact UCD Teaching and Learning)</p>
1 3	Out of class	<p>Use of pre-submission checklist for assessment⁶:</p> <p>When students hand in lab or other assignments, ask them to fill in a self-assessment of their assignment against the assessment criteria. This is more useful than feedback afterwards and they are clear on assessment expectations.</p>
1 4		<p>Research activity as a group:</p> <p>Use out-of-class groups as a learning experience; encourage them to investigate into an area. Ideas around assessing can be seen on p22 of resource*, alternatively it is an activity that is encouraged and not assessed (or an exam question is based on the activity).</p>

*see also *The 1st Year Assessment Design Principles (Module Design)*, UCD Teaching and Learning website <http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/moddesignfyassess.pdf>

References:

1. UK The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2007) Integrative Assessment: Managing Assessment Practices and Procedure.
<http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/managing-assessment-practices-and-procedures.pdf>
2. Nicol, D, J. & Macfarlane-Dick (2006), Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice, *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199-218.
3. O'Neill, G. Noonan, E. (2011) *The 1st Year Assessment Design Principles (Module Design)*, UCD Teaching and Learning website
<http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/moddesignfyassess.pdf>
- 4 Knight, P.T. (2000) The Value of a Programme-wide approach to Assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation*, 25 (3), 237-251.
5. Hornby, W (2003) Strategies for Streamlining Assessment: Case Studies from the Chalk Face http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=405760
6. O'Neill G (2012) Six ways to engage students with Feedback; UCD Focus of First Year podcast <http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/showcase/audiopodcasts/name.111526.en.html>
7. Peerwise <http://peerwise.cs.auckland.ac.nz/>
8. Sadler, D.R. (2009) *Transforming Holistic Assessment and Grading into a Vehicle for Complex Learning*, In G. Joughin, *Assessment, Learning and Judgement in Higher Education*, Springer Science + Business Media.