# First-time pass: Practices and examples to consider in developing your students’ assessment and feedback literacy.

The guide contains ideas and examples of practices in developing our students’ assessment and feedback literacy. By becoming assessment and feedback literate, students are in a better position to achieve a first-time pass.

By definition, "Assessment literacy is an iterative process, and therefore course design and implementation should provide unhurried opportunities and time within and across programmes to develop complex knowledge and skills, and to create a clear paths for progression."

(JISC, 2016, p. 16)

Winstone and Carless (2020, p. 23) take this one step further proposing assessment literacy to be "students’ understanding of the rules of assessment in context, their use of assessment tasks to monitor or further their learning, and their ability to use criteria to support the production of work of an appropriate standard.”

Responding to the need to support first-time pass practices, the **part one** of this guide will suggest immediate interventions (changes) that can be implemented in your practice, while the **second part** looks at considerations that may call for a redesign or rethinking of assessment and feedback practices. Do not assume your students have well developed academic skills, whatever the level of learning.

## Part one – immediate interventions

### When launching the assessment task:

Consider presenting your assessment brief not only in a written format but as a video recording(s) providing more detailed guidance to the students over the assessment journey. Alternatives approaches can include making a PowerPoint movie, Adobe SPARK videos or SPARK pages, where a more detailed explanation of different elements in the assessment brief can be unpacked. This allows the student to revisit the guidance as and when needed.

Following a step-wise approach to guide the students on the assessment journey, will contribute to students becoming confident in working on assessment tasks. Steps to consider can include the following:

#### A FIRST STEP

When launching an assessment task, guide students to create a mindmap or project plan for the assignment. This can be done in class (or online), in small groups where students create a plan using flipcharts or mind mapping tools where they can list key areas to explore, possible headings, subheadings, verbs used, and give an initial justification for their approach. Peer review can be introduced, taking place at an early stage, and guided by the tutor.

#### A SECOND STEP

Once a clear plan has been developed, the second step could be to guide students to explore appropriate literature, check validity, summarise, critique and start writing first drafts. Exploring these drafts, guided by the tutor, can allow for early feedback, both from peers and the tutor. At this stage, you may also ask for drafts to be submitted.

#### A THIRD STEP

Create opportunities (or encourage students) to write a brief reflection (or action plan), on how the formative feedback received, will shape their final submission, what changes they intend to make, what will they do differently, etc. Allow this output to be submitted with the final submission and perhaps give some credit (marks).

### Guide students to “project manage” their learning

Completing assignments involves a process and guidance on “project managing” students’ learning, has great potential to support them to get better at this process. Initially, we as tutors can take the lead in guiding the student in project planning their assessment engagement. Even small steps such a creating a mind map or Gant chart has the potential to help students focus their attention on the assignment. (See possible steps above.)

### Making sense of the assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are very much written in academic language, so it is critical to plan for activities to help students develop their understanding of the assessment criteria. Consider inviting students as individuals or in small groups, to re-phrase the criteria and discuss how meeting the criteria may be evidenced in their assignment. The examples below introduces approaches to consider in developing an understanding of assessment criteria and supports the development of students' self-judgement skills.

### Marking exercises using exemplars or model answers

Create an opportunity for students to consider model answers and or exemplars against the assessment criteria. This can help students to develop a better understanding of the assessment criteria and what makes for a good submission.

#### How to implement: (example approach)

* The tutor shares exemplars or model answers with the students. The exemplars can be with, or without, annotated feedback. Exemplars can be put together as extracts from previous submissions or a “mock submission” can be created.
* Students, individually or in small groups, are then invited to consider the exemplars against the assessment criteria.
* The tutor can guide the discussion and address issues raised, keep the conversation on track and provide further guidance in interpreting the assessment criteria.

#### The value of such an activity is that it has the potential to:

* Raise awareness of assessment criteria.
* Get students to start early on their task once they have viewed some examples.
* Take the fear out of an assessment.
* Help develop students’ self-judgement skills.

### Feedback on draft assessment plans

Giving formative feedback to all students on completed (or nearly completed assignments) is almost impossible particularly when we have very large classes. But giving feedback on students’ draft assignment plans, against the assessment criteria, may be more manageable. The feedback can be in the form of:

* Self-assessment (feedback) using the assessment criteria as guidance (or checklists).
* Peer-feedback discussion, again using the assessment criteria as guidance.
* Tutor feedback, against the assessment criteria.
* Audio or video feedback, which has the potential for turning around feedback more quickly and can feel more personalised.

Encourage engagement, for example, a reflection on the feedback, asking students to identify areas that seem underdeveloped and action plans showing how this will be addressed. As Carless and Boud (2018, p. 1315) suggested, “Student feedback literacy denotes the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies.".

### Encourage self-assessment

Being able to judge one's work, is a skill much valued in employment, so developing this skill in students is of value for a first-time pass and future success in the workplace. Find here some suggestions to implement self-assessment practices that students can engage with before submitting their final work. These practices can be explored in class or during a meeting with a personal tutor, and be part of the submission of the assignment. This form of reflection can be guided and expect students to:

* Self-assess against the assessment criteria or checklist provided by the tutor.
* Identify the strengths of their planned submission.
* Identify weaknesses in the work, and plans to improve the work (now or in the future).
* Suggest a grade they think their work deserves.
* State specifically what they want the tutor to comment on in their feedback.

The key driver for such an activity is that it gets the student to interrogate their work, really consider the assessment criteria and may get them to look at the feedback that they specifically requested. It might just prevent students from submitting their first draft…and help develop self-judgement skills.

### Giving feedback on “work in progress”

Feedback at the end may be too late, so consider moving to more timely, feedforward feedback, on “work in progress” or “en route” to submission. Such practices allow for more constructive guidance enabling timely enhancement. This type of feedforward feedback, can include:

* Timely helpful hints and tips to improve the current state of the task.
* Highlighting potential issues such as plagiarism.
* Feedback on drafts submitted by students (can be tutor, peer or self-feedback).
* A sampling of drafts identifying strengths and areas for improvement, then giving generic feedback to all based on findings.
* Reminders to students of what the tutor learned from errors in previous submissions.
* Generic feedback or guidance.
* Audio or video recordings of feedback and guidance accessible to students any time, any place.

Building in opportunities for formative feedforward feedback will also help to establish if work is authentic, i.e. the students' work, not commissioned.

### Sustainable monitoring

Consider guiding your students to keeptrack of their feedback over time from different assessment tasks in a module or previous modules. This can be done by keeping a journal or having a dedicated space in their portfolio to capture the feedback from multiple assessment tasks. Having this overview of feedback over time can help students to get the bigger picture or their strengths and development needs, and be used in conversations with tutors to develop action plans. Again, a useful approach in developing self-judgement skills.

### Using technology to facilitate feedback processes.

Given that we are generally working with post-millennial GenZ students, we need to consider how we can use technology to facilitate feedback. Examples are:

* Using quizzes in class (or online) to check learning help the tutor to identify early issues and possible “at risk” students. It can be implemented as an early diagnostic task.
* Meaningful use of Turnitin functionalities such as QUICKMARKS to develop extensive comments that can help in feeding forward comments in both current and future submissions.
* Audio and or video feedback, that students can access any time, any place, as and when needed. Thus not having to be in person and by you as a tutor in a face-to-face manner.
* In AULA, we now have an option of having a “conversation” with our students about their assessment drafts and or work in progress. In the Handin tool, there is an option of a feedback field, known as a ‘*Conversation’* field.
* Feedback in the conversation field is independent of any grading and students can respond to these comments, so generating opportunities for developmental discussion. If graded, comments added to this feedback field can be released to students before or at the time, the grades are released. Guidance is provided on using the Conversation field can be found at: <https://aula.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360053926834>

## Part two – rethinking assessment design

Whilst some of the suggestions and ideas in part one can be immediately implemented in your practice, looking longer term, we may have to return to the drawing board. How we design assessment tasks, and how we give feedback, may have a real impact on first-time pass rates.

Some considerations include:

* Consider the volume and timings of assessment tasks, and as course teams consider the risk of having too many high stakes assessments as opposed to medium or low stake assessments.
* Map the students’ assessment journey across the semester to enable early and timely feedback that can be applied in the future (feedforward).
* Break down larger assessment tasks. For example, build in a two-stage submission to allow for formative (and or summative) feedforward-feedback, thus allowing for application of feedback in follow up stages. Typical examples can be a portfolio or patchwork assessment.
* Revisit the assessment briefs to establish whether the guidance is clear and concise. See earlier guidance on developing guidance in alternative formats.
* Consider how the design of an assessment task can minimise the possibility of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism and contract cheating. By having more authentic (industry relevant) and inclusive assessment tasks, students are more likely to produce original work.
* Course teams may need to consider what tasks in a semester (or year) are critical in evidencing achievement of course learning outcomes, and ensure that these are assessment secure. Minimising misconduct in all assessment tasks not always possible.

## General recommendations to encourage a first-time pass:

•        All first-year students should get feedback within the first 6 weeks of study.

•        Feedback should be on the skills needed for studying at HE level.

•        Feedback should help to identify students that struggle.

•        Early, low stakes assessment (low weighting).

•        Feedback on a draft or a portion of an assessment task (an example of a low stakes assessment).

•        A self-assessment task (with some feedback from the tutor).

•        Feedback on a “hurdle” threshold task.

•        Online activities where students can test their understanding and get feedback.

•        Group and/or workshop tasks where group members provide feedback to one another.

Adapted from Everett & Wheeler (2013, p.48)

## Some literature to explore:

Carless, D., Salter, D., Yang, M. & Lam, J. (2011). Developing sustainable feedback practices. *Studies in Higher Education, 36*(4) <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075071003642449>

Carless, D. & Boud, D (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 43*(8) <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>

Everett and Wheeler, P. (ed.) (2013). Ideas and inspiration for good practice in assessment. Australian Catholic University: Learning and Teaching Centre. Available: [https://staff.acu.edu.au/-/media/staff-site-rte-docs-only/learning-and-teaching/documents/ideas-assessment.pdf?la=en&hash=8960E46508724B9D972CBF3342FEB259](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fstaff.acu.edu.au%2F-%2Fmedia%2Fstaff-site-rte-docs-only%2Flearning-and-teaching%2Fdocuments%2Fideas-assessment.pdf%3Fla%3Den%26hash%3D8960E46508724B9D972CBF3342FEB259&data=04%7C01%7Cbsx185%40coventry.ac.uk%7C5a2aa8f777b7472eaf4e08d8e87ac57a%7C4b18ab9a37654abeac7c0e0d398afd4f%7C0%7C0%7C637514964711886803%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=HtP8AOxiwsTyzFQ0STYCfksPtOD0DaVgJYA0l1z30Ww%3D&reserved=0)

JISC Guide. (2016) Transforming assessment and feedback with technology. Available: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/transformingassessment-andfeedback/assessment-literacies>

Price, M., Rust, C., O’Donovan, B., Handley, K., and Bryant, R. (2012). *Assessment Literacy: The Foundation for Improving Student Learning. Oxford: The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.*

Winstone, N. & Carless, D. (2020). *Designing Learning-Focused Approach. Oxon: Routledge. Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: A Learning-Focused Approach*. Oxon: Routledge.

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| **Add your plans and interventions…** |