

Involving learners and others in the assessment process

This handout will cover:

- How to involve learners in the assessment process
- Self-assessment: examples, strengths and limitations
- Peer-assessment: examples, strengths and limitations
- Questioning
- Involving others in the assessment process
- Sources of information
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How to involve learners in the assessment process

Learners should always be involved in the assessment process from commencement to completion. Initial assessment involves the learner by ascertaining their prior learning, current skills and knowledge. The results can be used as a foundation on which to agree a suitable assessment plan.

Strengths of learner involvement in initial assessment

Can give the learner an opportunity to discuss any concerns.
Can be carried out electronically.

Limitations of learner involvement in initial assessment

Learners might be apprehensive about taking written, oral or practical tests.
Learners might not always be truthful about they have or have not achieved.

Involving the learner from when they commence will help you plan an appropriate course of action should any support be necessary. Involving your learners also gives them the opportunity to inform you of anything which might affect their progress and/or achievement.

It might be that one of your learners has already achieved a unit or part of the programme requirements elsewhere. You could ascertain if they have any evidence of this i.e. proof of their achievement such as a certificate. If your learner wasn't involved, they could unnecessarily repeat certain aspects. Checking the authenticity and currency of the evidence provided is crucial. However, it can be time consuming for both the learner to prove, and the assessor to assess.

Involving learners

If you are teaching, you can involve your learners at the commencement of a session by asking them if they have any prior knowledge or skills. In this way, you can draw and build upon their experiences throughout the session.

At the end of the session you could involve your learners by using a quiz or another activity to check what they have learnt.

If you are assessing in the workplace you could involve your learners by discussing what will be assessed, how and when. This would enable a two way conversation to take place leading to an appropriate plan of action.

You could regularly ask your learners how they feel they are progressing, hopefully they will identify any issues before you need to tell them. Assessing vocational subjects and assessing academic subjects will have different ways of involving learners. Therefore you will need to plan how you will involve your learners depending upon what and where you are assessing.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment involves a learner assessing their own progress, which can lead to them setting their own goals. It can give responsibility and ownership of their progress and achievements. However, learners might feel they have achieved more than they actually have, therefore, you will still need to confirm their achievements or otherwise.

Self-assessment strengths are that:	Self-assessment limitations include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• it encourages learners to check their own progress• it encourages reflection• mistakes can be seen as opportunities• it promotes learner involvement and personal responsibility• learners are focused upon the assessment requirements• learners can identify when they are ready for a formal assessment• learners can take ownership of the process i.e. identifying areas for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• assessor needs to discuss and confirm progress and achievement• difficult to be objective when making a decision• learners may feel they have achieved more than they actually have• learners must fully understand the assessment requirements• learners need to be specific about what they have achieved and what they need to do to complete any gaps• some learners may lack confidence in their ability to make decisions about their own progress

Examples of self-assessment activities include:

- awarding a grade for their presentation
- suggesting improvements regarding their skills and knowledge
- compiling a written statement of how they could improve their work.

Peer-assessment

Peer-assessment involves a learner assessing another learner's progress. This would actively involve your learners, however, you would need to ensure everyone was aware of the criteria to be assessed, how to reach a decision and how to give constructive feedback.

Peer-assessment can be useful to develop and motivate learners. However, this should be managed carefully, as you may have some learners who do not get along, and might use the opportunity to demoralise one another. You would need to give advice to your learners as to how to give feedback effectively. If learner feedback is given skilfully, other learners may think more about what their peers have said than about what you have said. If you consider peer-assessment has a valuable contribution to make to the assessment process, ensure you plan for it to enable your learners to become accustomed and more proficient at giving it. The final decision as to the achievement of your learner will lie with you.

Peer-assessment strengths are that:	Peer-assessment limitations include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps develop communication skills • leads to discussions which everyone can benefit from • learners are focused upon the assessment requirements or can use a checklist • learners may accept comments from peers more readily than those from the assessor • peers might notice something the assessor hasn't • promotes attention as learners have to focus on what is happening • they increase attention for activities such as peer presentations if feedback has to be given • they promote learner and peer interaction and involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all peers should be involved therefore planning needs to take place as to who will give feedback and to whom • appropriate conditions and environment are needed • assessor needs to confirm each learner's progress and achievements as it might be different from their peers' judgements • everyone needs to understand the assessment requirements • learners might be subjective and friendly rather than objective with their decisions • needs to be carefully managed to ensure no personality conflicts or unjustified comments • should be supported with other assessment methods • some peers may be anxious, nervous or lack confidence to give feedback

Examples of peer-assessment activities include:

- assessing each other's work anonymously and giving written or verbal feedback
- giving grades and/or written or verbal feedback regarding peer presentations
- holding group discussions before collectively agreeing a grade and giving feedback, perhaps for a presentation
- suggesting improvements to their peers' work
- writing a written statement of how their peers could improve.

Questioning

Depending upon the topic you are assessing, there are ways of involving your learner throughout the process by the use of questions. These include questioning types such as:

Open: 'How would you.....?'

Closed: 'Would you.....?'

Probing: 'Why exactly was that?'

Prompting: 'What about...?'

Clarifying: 'Can you go over that again?'

Leading: 'So what you are saying is... '

Hypothetical: 'What would you do if...?'

If you are formally assessing a learner for a practical skill to confirm achievement, you could ask them *open questions* to check their knowledge and understanding. These usually begin with who, what, when, where, why and how.

If you are informally assessing a learner, for example, asking questions during a session to check progress, you could start with an open question. You could then move onto a hypothetical question if you are not getting the response you expected.

If you are asking questions to a group of learners, make sure you give everyone the chance to answer, not just those who are keen to answer first. If possible, ask a question to everyone in the group at some point, this enables all individuals to be included and involved.

Involving others in the assessment process

At some point, you might need to liaise with other people who are involved in the assessment process of your learners. For example, to inform them of any particular

learner requirements to ensure consistency of support. You might have a learner who would benefit from a different assessment method i.e. verbal questions instead of written questions. You might therefore need to liaise with the awarding organisation to ensure this is acceptable if they are working towards a qualification. You could have a learner who would prefer to be assessed bilingually, and you might therefore need to contact another member of staff who could help.

If you are liaising with external contacts, you should remain professional at all times as you are representing your organisation. People might not always remember your name, however, you will be known as *that person from XYZ organisation*. You therefore need to create a good and lasting impression of yourself and your organisation. You should also remember aspects of confidentiality and data protection, and keep notes of all activities in case you need to refer to them again.

Sources of information

You will need to know what sources of information can be available to help support the assessment process for your learners and others who are involved.

For example, information such as the qualification, standards or job role to be assessed; progress and achievement records; assessment plans and feedback documentation; and resources such as text books, internet websites and journals that will prove useful.

Workplace supervisors, mentors and witnesses will need details of your learner's progress and achievements. Support staff will need relevant information regarding your learner to provide any necessary help and guidance. Communicating regularly will ensure everyone who is involved with your learner knows of their progress and achievement.

Reading list

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2016) *Principles and Practices of Assessment* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2013) *Passing Assessments for the Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Ollin R & Tucker J (2016) *The Vocational Assessor Handbook* (6th Edn) London Kogan Page

Read H (2016) *The Best Assessor's Guide* Bideford Read On Publications Ltd

Tummons J (2011) *Assessing Learning in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Wilson L (2012) *Practical teaching: A guide to assessment and quality assurance* Andover Cengage Learning

Website list

Assessment in education - <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/caie20/24/1>

Assessor resources - www.anngravells.com/resources/assessment123

Ofqual Guide to Authenticity: <http://tinyurl.com/OfqualAuthenticity>

Peer- and self-assessment: www.nclrc.org/essentials/assessing/peereval.htm

Plagiarism: www.plagiarism.org

Reading list for assessors - www.anngravells.com/reading-lists/assessment