

# Enabling learning through assessment

[Education](#)



To enable learning is to equip and facilitate the learner with all the necessary skills required to understand and retain knowledge. One way in which the teacher can ensure that learning has taken place is through the medium of assessment – to evaluate what the learner has taken on board. Assessment methods help form a vital stage of a learner’s journey helping them to draw on skills they have acquired, and aids in the consolidation of the knowledge learnt. From the perspective of the teacher – assessment gives the advantage to better understand the learner’s level of knowledge and understanding relating to a given topic.

This understanding feeds into to assist in the tailoring of each class alongside the teaching style to best include and cater for all learners regardless of their learning style or speed. In the area of Painting and Decorating, as well as all other subject areas, there are many different ways that one can assess learners. With each assessment there are three main stages that the learner will engage with in their journey; and these stages are the initial, formative and summative stage. These three stages are used at different times throughout a course to help inform the teacher on a range of matters.

When beginning a course it is essential to assess the students previous level of learning or experience in order to gauge the student’s current level of knowledge in the given subject area. Once this information is obtained the teacher is then equipped to effectively adapt the teaching style to meet their learning needs and ensure the inclusion of all students, so that they might achieve the best outcome in all stages of the learning process. The use of

the initial assessment can be demonstrated in a range of ways, and adjusted to meet the skill level of the learners.

Some may be new to the learning process therefore it can be useful to keep this stage of assessment informal, so not to cause too much distress to the learners who may feel pressured by ‘assessment’. One way this can be achieved is to keep the initial assessment in the form of informal questions and answers, as part of icebreaker activities. Alternatively quizzes or tests completed individually in the first week of teaching are also a useful way for the teacher to assess the needs of learners and adequately prepare them for the structure of ongoing assessment for the duration of the course.

Having assessed the student’s knowledge base the teacher can then proceed to the next stage of the assessment process - ongoing formative assessments. These ongoing formative assessments help ensure that students are able to demonstrate progressive understanding of the learning objectives; which are set for each teaching session. This stage of assessment would usually take the form of a combination of formal and informal assessment, including observation of practical activities and/or group exercises during sessions; cumulative project or coursework to form a final portfolio; essay writing; extension work, and a learning diary.

All of these aspects of assessment form the basis from which feedback can be provided to address the learners’ performance, as well as acting as a tool to gauge each individuals strengths and weaknesses. These ongoing forms of assessment, along with tutorials to discuss progress are aimed to boost confidence, motivate and reassure learners that their understanding of the

subject matter is moving forward, and address what can be done if improvements are necessary.

Having assessed the progress of the learners throughout the course the final stage of assessment remains. It is important to have a summative assessment as this will ensure that the overall aims and objectives of the course have been met. The summative assessment is nearly always a formal method of assessment and is so placed as it is the deciding element in which it is judged whether or not the learner has achieved the criteria set for the award – in this case for an NVQ/Diploma in Painting and Decorating.

In order to determine if the criteria has been met the final assessment takes the form of a final exam, in which the material learnt over the duration of the course is brought together to assess the students grasp of the subject matter as a whole. This final exam could be a written paper, or a practical assessment where observation is required to ensure that the necessary skills have been mastered to an acceptable standard. A final portfolio of work can also be used to achieve this - by drawing together work completed throughout the course.

In order to provide valid, reliable and appropriate assessments it is vital to conduct each stage in compliance with the principles of assessment. It is also important that the correct type of assessment is conducted for the given subject, and the reasons for carrying them out are clear, with a specific goal or target, and are all fair and equal – thus helping learner's to foster learning and accomplish the set goals. The main principles of assessment to consider are reliability, validity, sufficiency, current in nature and authenticity - these principles must be adhered to so that we have quality assessment methods.

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Therefore to expand, it is important when giving learners an assessment to consider if the assessment is sufficient - the teacher must consider the reasons the assessment is being given and whether the assessment meets those requirements. As such the teacher must be aware of the best types of assessment method to use in order to meet the needs and desired outcomes. Second, the reliability of the assessment must be established to ensure that all responses in the assessment are judged to the same standard with fairness, so that any examiner grading the assessment would give the same result.

One way to achieve reliability is to set clear concise goals in terms of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. If an assessment is reliable it ensures that if the assessment were given again it would give the same result. Equally just as important as reliability is the validity. Validity safeguards that the criteria of the assessment effectively measures the knowledge and understanding of each learner at their respective levels. In order to achieve a current assessment it must be based on topics that are relevant, and reflect the changing nature of the subject, keeping it up-to-date.

Lastly, the authenticity of the assessment must be ensured - they must be completed by the learner without external help or other resources, so that it can be judged as an accurate reflection of each learner's knowledge and capability within a given subject. The principles of assessment are vitally important within the specialism of Painting and Decorating as to the teacher/assessor must be able to judge the standard of work that the learners carry out whilst also critically engaging with the students to confirm

they are competent and ready to work as part of team in a variety of construction sites and situations they will be expected to work on; from commercial buildings, to new build industrial areas. On completion of the Painting and Decorating apprenticeship learners need to be skilled trade's people - able to carry out their job to a high standard. In order to achieve this each unit has both practical and theory elements that are assessed on an ongoing basis via an end of unit test.

Continual on-going assessment is implemented to ensure the necessary competency of practical skills. The importance of following the principles of assessment is paramount as it is all that we have to ensure that the work completed by our learners is their own, and that their knowledge is accurate. To fulfill this need all students will also have a learner portfolio, which includes the students' paperwork from the theory lessons, as well as their learning diary, self-evaluation, and teacher evaluation sheets.

All the units are completed in one year with the students' knowledge and skills assessed in a final practical exam that extends over a five-day period in which all students have one task to complete – thus complying with the necessary reliability measures. The set task combines all elements taught throughout the year. The advantage of this type of assessment is that it allows direct observation – ensuring authenticity, of the learner as they conduct their work, the observer can therefore see first hand the students level of skill and knowledge.