



Assessment for Learning: notes to accompany the video resource

This document has been produced to support our [video resource](#) that describes the CETTAcademy, process-model of Assessment for Learning (AfL). It is essentially a collection of readings (Think-Pieces) that relate to and support the principles of AfL laid out within the video, together with relevant references for further reading and research.

If you would like more clarifications on the principles described within the [video](#), or to challenge any of them, I would be very happy to have that dialogue with you. You can contact me, as below.

I hope this resource is effective in enabling you to critically evaluate your current practice in assessment and tracking and I also hope that these ideas prove useful in improving teaching and assessment strategies in your organisation.

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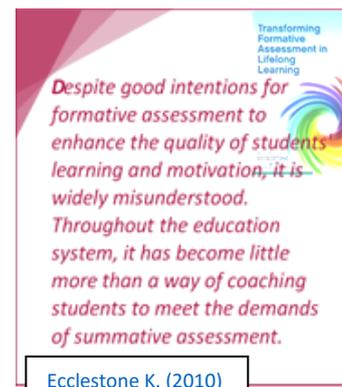
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Key Concepts

- 1. Assessment Perspectives: 'FOR', 'OF' and 'AS' Learning**
- 2. Approaches to AfL (Formative Assessment)**
- 3. The CETTAcademy, Process Model of AfL**
- 4. Goal Setting and Motivation**
- 5. Learner-Led Tracking and ILPs**
- 6. A Paradigm Shift in Assessment and Tracking**
- 7. Useful Reading and YouTube Videos**
- 8. References**

(1) Assessment Perspectives: 'FOR', 'OF' and 'AS' Learning

Assessment **for** Learning (also known as Formative Assessment) is often misunderstood to mean periodic testing of attainment. This approach is, in effect, 'mini' summative assessment and predisposes teachers to check the outcomes of learning (or 'not learning') retrospectively, as stages towards final, or summative, assessment. This is Assessment **of** Learning and cannot, of its nature, support learning; it also runs the significant risk of demotivating learners through repeated testing (see below). Wiggins (1998, p.7-8) states that



...the aim of assessment is primarily to educate and improve student performance, not merely to audit it. I use the terms auditing and audit test to describe checking up on activities after they are over, as accountants audit a business's books to check that all the financial records match over a fiscal year....

Harlen (2006, p.77) critiques assessment, in the sense of 'outcome testing', by concluding that –

- ... assessment can have a **negative impact on student motivation** for learning by:
- *Creating a classroom culture which favours transmissive teaching and undervalues variety in ways of learning;*
 - *Focusing the content of teaching narrowly on what is tested;*
 - *Orienting student to adopt goals as performance rather than goals as learning;*
 - *Providing predominantly judgemental feedback in terms of scores and grades;*
 - *Favouring conditions in which summative judgements permeate all teachers' assessment transactions."*

Black and Wiliam (1998) were responsible for the early, and most significant, work in reconceptualising formative assessment. They did much to explain the difference between assessment that 'promotes', rather than simply, 'audits' learning.

"In order to make the difference quite clear it is useful to summarise the characteristics of assessment that promotes learning. These are that:

- *it is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part;*
- *it involves sharing learning goals with pupils;*
- *it aims to help pupils to know and to recognise the standards they are aiming for;*
- *it involves pupils in self-assessment;*
- *it provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them;*
- *it is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve;*
- *it involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data."* (p.7)

The Nuffield Foundation, Assessment Reform Group, based on the work of Black and William (1998) – as above – offers the following advice on assessment in the classroom.

Implications for the work of teachers in classrooms

The review emphasises what teachers in classrooms can do to avoid the negative impact of tests on motivation for learning. It also indicates the actions that can enhance motivation for learning. To accomplish these goals, teachers should:

do more of this ...

Provide choice and help pupils to take responsibility for their learning.

Discuss with pupils the purpose of their learning and provide feedback that will help the learning process.

Encourage pupils to judge their work by how much they have learned and by the progress they have made.

Help pupils to understand the criteria by which their learning is assessed and to assess their own work.

Develop pupils' understanding of the goals of their work in terms of what they are learning; provide feedback to pupils in relation to these goals.

Help pupils to understand where they are in relation to learning goals and how to make further progress.

Give feedback that enables pupils to know the next steps and how to succeed in taking them.

Encourage pupils to value effort and a wide range of attainments.

Encourage collaboration among pupils and a positive view of each others' attainments.

and do less of this ...

Define the curriculum in terms of what is in the tests to the detriment of what is not tested.

Give frequent drill and practice for test taking.

Teach how to answer specific test questions.

Allow pupils to judge their work in terms of scores or grades.

Allow test anxiety to impair some pupils' performance (particularly girls and lower performing pupils).

Use tests and assessment to tell students where they are in relation to others.

Give feedback relating to pupils' capabilities, implying a fixed view of each pupil's potential.

Compare pupils' grades and allow pupils to compare grades, giving status on the basis of test achievement only.

Emphasise competition for marks or grades among pupils.

Testing,

Motivation
and Learning

Assessment Reform Group
supported by The Nuffield Foundation

[Testing, Motivation and Learning, Assessment Reform Group.](#)

For further information regarding the difference between Formative Assessment (AfL) and Summative Assessment, see the Education Scotland website, [Journey to Excellence](#) .

Earl (2003) goes further in distinguishing and promoting assessment that can be described as Assessment **as** Learning. Earl argues that learners should take ownership of (formative) assessment so as to understand better what and how they are learning in a deep and more coherent way, through monitoring and critically evaluating their own learning. This process, according to Earl, becomes intrinsic to learning itself rather than sitting outside of it.

The view of learner-led/owned assessment as learning itself, is further reinforced by the learning theory of 'Metacognition', discussed further, below. The CETTAcademy process model of AfL, incorporates both assessment **for** and **as** learning (see below).

(2) Approaches to Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment)

The Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008[1], p.3) defined AfL as:

- *sharing learning goals with learners – and making sure they know the standard or level they are aiming at*
- *teacher and learner assessing progress through methods that include learner self-assessment and peer review (note that learners often need help to develop and use these skills well)*
- *teacher and learner together reviewing and reflecting on assessment formation*
- *giving feedback to learners in ways that enable them to improve and plan their next steps.*

Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008), *Individual Learning Plans Guidance for assessment and learning* (No.2): QIA

The Nuffield Foundation, Assessment Reform Group (1999, p.4-5) describe assessment that supports learning, as follows.

..... **improving learning through assessment** depends on five, deceptively simple, key factors:

- *the provision of effective feedback to pupils;*
- *the active involvement of pupils in their own learning;*
- *adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment;*
- *a recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are crucial influences on learning;*
- *the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.*

At the same time several inhibiting factors were identified. Among these are:

- *a tendency for teachers to assess quantity of work and presentation rather than quality;*
- *greater attention given to marking and grading, much of it tending to lower the self-esteem of pupils, rather than to providing advice for improvement;*
- *a strong emphasis on comparing pupils with each other which demoralises the less successful learners;*
- *teachers' feedback to pupils often serves social and managerial purposes rather than helping them to learn more effectively;*
- *teachers not knowing enough about their pupils' learning needs."*

Wiggins (1998, p.8) talks in terms of *educative assessment* as no longer being separate from learning and is "a major, essential and integrated part of teaching and learning".

In another of the Skills for Life Improvement Programme publications (2008 [2]), AfL is described as

..... a **continuous dialogue** that should:

- *focus on the whole person, taking into account feelings as well as skills, and understanding any barriers the learner may experience*
- *encourage learners to take more responsibility for their own learning*
- *ensure that learners are aware of what they are learning and why.*

3. The CETTAcademy, Process Model of AfL

At CETTAcademy, we frequently re-examine education concepts 'from the ground, up' in order to ensure that they continue to be 'fit-for-purpose'. This approach, known as 'process re-engineering' is well established in industry, as part of on-going quality assurance and improvement. Given growing concerns about established practice and current understanding of assessment processes, we chose to look at this again.

Firstly, as a 'thought-experiment', we considered how a teacher can facilitate processes of assessment that will support learning (as it happens), rather than audit attainment (after it has occurred). There is a highly logical, and common-sense, set of conditions that must be in place for this to occur.

<p>a) AfL must relate to learning, as it happens (in 'real-time'), otherwise it cannot be called Assessment for Learning but a reflection on learning cannot happen unless learning is actually taking.</p>	<p>However, can the teacher be sure that all learners (in a large group, or working remotely) are actually engaging in the agreed learning activity)?</p>
<p>b) A strategy is necessary to ensure that all learners are engaging with the task throughout the guided learning period.</p>	<p>However, the teacher does not have time to lead (or 'police') engagement with all learners at all times. So -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. can strategies for monitoring of engagement be designed into each learning activity? ii. can this be achieved so that learners rather than teachers are the active agents in this? (Because teachers are unlikely to have sufficient time to do this.)
<p>c) A non-negotiable requirement for learners to track their own learning, during the learning task, will help to ensure engagement or make the lack of it visible (thereby enabling engagement to be monitored).</p>	<p>For this to be effective, the means of tracking has to be very efficient for the learner to maintain and for the teacher to access. (The value of this outcome warrants any efforts made to design effective processes).</p>
<p>d) Having established learner engagement, AfL requires an evaluation of how well that learning is progressing (or is not). Learner-led tracking therefore needs to include the learner's view of this.</p>	<p>An evaluation of how well (or not) learning is progressing enables the teacher to acknowledge support needs, at an early point, and to prioritise support. It also further engages the learner in critical thinking that deepens their learning (Assessment as Learning).</p>
<p>e) Learning that has been tracked (monitored and evaluated) can be reviewed with far greater reliability and efficiency than learning that has not.</p>	<p>Reviews require the teacher's subject expertise, to confirm or correct learning process and outcomes. Effective learner-led tracking provides a more reliable process for the teacher to make informed judgements. Reviewing can be triggered by a learner's evaluation ('help required') or as general motivational and informal process of coaching learners whilst they are actively engaged in a learning 'challenge'.</p>
<p>f) A valid and reliable review process, by a subject expert, enables valid goal setting to support the learner's next steps. When goals are expressed correctly, they also facilitate the motivation to engage fully again.</p>	<p>For this to be effective, goals need to energise learners as well as direct the next stage of learning. Goals therefore need to be expressed in ways that are relevant and realistic in relation to the learner's values and aspirations for life and work.</p>

Monitoring, evaluation and review (MER) are well established concepts in quality assurance and project management and are particularly prevalent as a framework for governance in the primary education sector. The following example, is from guidance given by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Monitoring is the ongoing process of regularly collecting and analyzing relevant information to make sure you are doing what you set out to do.

Evaluation is when you assess whether what you have been doing is really making the difference that you intended it to.

Review is when you look at the results of an evaluation and decide whether it needs to change.

<http://www.scvo.org.uk/running-your-organisation/finance-business-management/business-and-strategic-planning/monitoring-evaluation-review/>

These principles are generic and the parallel with teaching and learning is very clear. They also correlate well with the psychological theory of Metacognition. Metacognition is the process of thinking about thinking, or learning about learning. It is closely associated with the concept of critical self-reflection and learner autonomy, in which learners consider how effectively they are learning as well as the value of the learning itself.

Jacobs and Paris (1987) describe metacognition, in this context, as -

1. **Planning:** the appropriate selection of strategies and the correct allocation of resources that affect task performance.
2. **Monitoring:** one's awareness of comprehension and task performance
3. **Evaluating:** appraising the final product of a task and the efficiency at which the task was performed. This can include re-evaluating strategies that were used.

The [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) is an independent, charitable education improvement agency. They have sponsored research into metacognition and summarise it as follows.

Meta-cognition and self-regulation approaches (sometimes known as 'learning to learn' approaches) aim to help learners think about their own learning more explicitly. This is usually by teaching pupils specific strategies to set goals, and monitor and evaluate their own academic development. Self-regulation means managing one's own motivation towards learning. The intention is often to give pupils a repertoire of strategies to choose from during learning activities.

Meta-cognition and self-regulation approaches have consistently high levels of impact, with pupils making an average of eight months' additional progress. The evidence indicates that teaching these strategies can be particularly effective for low achieving and older pupils.

The EEF suggest that education providers that wish to exploit the benefits of metacognition should consider the following.

1. Teaching approaches which encourage learners to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning have very high potential, but require careful implementation.
2. Have you taught pupils explicit strategies on how to plan, monitor and evaluate specific aspects of their learning? Have you given them opportunities to use them with support and then independently?
3. Teaching how to plan: Have you asked pupils to identify the different ways that they could plan (general strategies) and then how best to approach a particular task (specific technique)?
4. Teaching how to monitor: Have you asked pupils to consider where the task might go wrong? Have you asked the pupils to identify the key steps for keeping the task on track?

5. *Teaching how to evaluate: Have you asked pupils to consider how they would improve their approach to the task if they completed it again?*

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/meta-cognition-and-self-regulation/>

The American Psychological Association (2015) focus on the impact of evaluation and review the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Evaluation and review are vital components of performance improvement. They help you understand how you are performing, whether you are reaching your goals, and they inform your decisions about what to do next. In essence, evaluations answer three questions:

1. *What?*
2. *So what?*
3. *Now what?*

(4) Goal Setting and Motivation

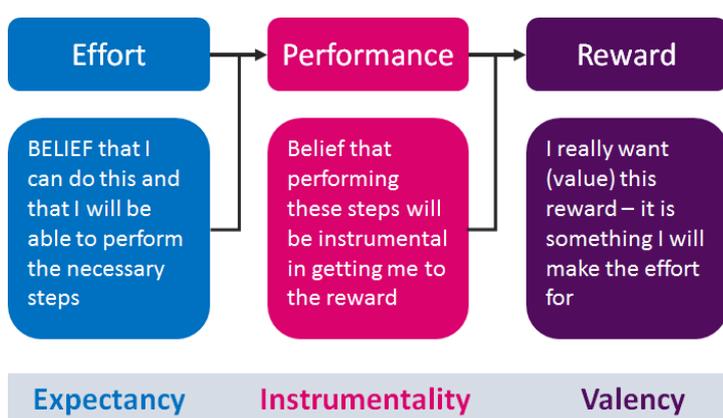
Effective goals motivate as well as provide direction for learning. Whilst SMART targets or lesson aims and objects might be highly precise in explaining what is required, they rarely do much to inspire and engage learners. For example, NRDC (2009, p.43) report concerns regarding how assessment can damage learning.

“Assessment is one of the key factors that affect motivation. Stiggins claims that teachers can enhance or destroy students’ desires to learn more quickly and more permanently through their use of assessment than through any other tools at their disposal (2001: 36).” (p. 61-2)

How learners see the goals of engaging in a learning task determines the direction in which effort will be made and how they will organise and prioritise (or not) time spent for learning ... Goals will only be selected if they are understood, appear achievable, and are seen as worthwhile ...

..... we know from the formative assessment literature that all too often learners have very little idea of what and why they are ‘learning’ something and how important the sharing of learning objectives with learners is (Black and William 1998a). Our own work elsewhere suggests that one effective approach is the sharing of learning objectives via a process of negotiation with learners during the process of learning (Hodgen and Marshall 2005).

The ‘art’ of explaining learning goals, in ways that enable learners to understand their purpose or relevance to them personally, is an essential generic teaching skill within the dual professional role of the teacher. The teacher must be able to clearly explain the value of each stage of learning in relation to real-work or real-life both and, at least, be able to explain how the next goal fits within the larger learning journey.



Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory of motivation, is well known within the discourse relating to Human Resource Management but is less well known within the education field. It nevertheless offers a useful and intuitive model of motivation that can significantly impact on educational practice. It proposes three factors that lead to motivated behaviour - and all three are required (see figure, left). Simply put, and from right to left, these are:

- a desire to achieve or avoid a particular outcome;
- a belief that (or trust in) a particular plan of action will lead to that outcome, and;
- finally, the self-belief in one's own ability to make the necessary 'journey'.

Hopefully, the relevance of this model to the setting of 'meaningful' learning-goals, self-efficacy, resilience and the learning journey, itself, are clear. It is interesting to note, however, that it is rare to find all three factors addressed equally, if at all. Clearly, there is increasing recognition of the importance of self-efficacy in learning in general, and in learning maths and English in particular. We would recommend that all teachers should practice contextualising all three factors in articulating clear goals to learners and that this should be considered an essential skill.

(5) Learner-Led Tracking and ILPs

The importance and value of learner 'ownership' of assessment and tracking processes is consistently stressed across the entire literature about AfL and formative assessment. Practitioner-based studies tend to suggest, however, that tracking is more likely to be an unwelcome and bureaucratic responsibility of the teacher and that ILPs are not a valued process. For example, NRDC (2009, p.33) reported that -

In their interviews (30/11/07), the teacher-researchers raised the issue of ILPs and session objectives. All the teacher-researchers valued both ILPs and learning objectives in principle, yet found the actual practice time-consuming, bureaucratic and disconnected from learners' needs. The following comments are typical: we have to do the ILPs and they have to write down the lesson objectives. It's a directive from on high. The ILPs should be a good thing. It's good to think about, but they take a lot of time and time's something we haven't got a lot of. ... I think a lot about my students and what they need. [Teacher-Researcher Interviews]

The Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008) recommended that tracking should be learner-led and that ILPs should be a dynamic working document, owned by the learner.

Record the outcomes of assessment for learning in the ILP. Encourage learners to complete the record themselves, with support if necessary. Learners need to feel they own their records. Ask them to record a review, but if you write it up, make sure you use language that the learner understands.

- *Ensure that the record stresses the positive and notes the learner's achievements, not just the next challenges*
- *The record should also note what was discussed, record important points made – acknowledging the learner's contribution – and clearly state agreed future action.*
- *Recording also acts as reinforcement and can play a part in maintaining learner motivation. The written record is tangible proof of what the learner has achieved.*

Records of reviews will help both you and the learner to take a longer-term view. They demonstrate how far the learner has travelled since starting their programme.

An effective individual learning plan (ILP) is at the heart of assessment, learning, support and achievement. It helps the learner to become an active, motivated partner in learning. The ILP is:

- *a personalised, flexible route map to guide each learner's journey*
- *a dynamic working document, owned and used by the learner, supported by teachers, employers and others*
- *a record of learning goals and progression routes, initial and diagnostic assessment information, learning targets, progress and achievements within different contexts for learning*
- *a communication aid between the learner and others who support the learning process in various contexts*
- *a way of making and reinforcing links and connections between topics, subject and personal, learning and thinking skills.*

The Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008) goes on to describe possible ways in which the ILP, as a 'living' and evolving record of the learner journey, can inform organisational performance management as well as teachers and other learning support staff roles.

Learners can use ILPs to:	Staff can use ILPs to:	Managers can use ILPs to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take ownership of their own learning • recognize the value of prior experiences • make sense of new experiences and understand how they learn • plan to practise skills and gain confidence by applying them in a range of different contexts such as the workplace, at home or in the community • identify and understand barriers to learning, and where they can find to remove them • measure their own success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to learner voices, review performance and respond to learners' needs • integrate processes around the learner: initial and diagnostic assessment; action planning; learner contracts; additional support needs; tutorial records; learner performance; progression options and exit information • match teaching and learning to learners' strengths and needs, and ensure that learners are on the right programmes and achieving according to expectations • plan opportunities for learners to extend their learning into contexts such as the workplace, community or leisure activities • Plan opportunities for progression to further learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make efficient use of core processes • evaluate learners' responses to new teaching and learning approaches • support consistent standards and sustainable improvement • record the RARPA (Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement) process • monitor the quality of provision and provide data for impact measures.

The CETTAcademy believe strongly in the value of an effective, learner-led progress recording system. We recommend, however, that the use of the term ILP and Individual Learning Plan/Programme be dropped in favour of alternative terminology that is not encumbered with negative associations.

(6) A Paradigm Shift in Assessment and Tracking

In talking about their experiences of operationalising effective formative assessment, Black et al (2004) explain that -

....the learning environment envisaged requires a classroom culture that may well be unfamiliar and disconcerting for both teachers and students. The effect of the innovations implemented by our teachers was to change the 'classroom contract' between the teacher and the student - the rules that govern the behaviors that are expected and seen as legitimate by teachers and students. The students have to change from behaving as passive recipients of the knowledge offered by the teacher to becoming active learners who can take responsibility for and manage their own learning.

For the teachers, courage is necessary. One of the striking features of the project was that, in the early stages, many participants described the new approach as 'scary' because they felt they were going to lose control of their classes. Toward the end of the project, they spoke not of losing control but of sharing responsibility for the students' learning with the class - exactly the same process but viewed from two very different perspectives.

Earl and Katz (2006, p.70-1) talk about the impact of Assessment **for** Learning, and Assessment **as** Learning, on pedagogy and the culture of teaching and learning.

- *Assessment for learning is premised on a belief that all students are capable of learning the intended curriculum, and that teachers have the requisite content knowledge and the pedagogical skills to find ways to facilitate students' learning. If a teacher does not hold this view, he or she may feel conflicted and may focus negatively on why it can't work.*
- *Assessment as learning requires reconceptualizing not just assessment, but teaching and learning as well. Assessment as learning means giving up the more traditional constructs of transmitting knowledge, "managing" classrooms, and maintaining control, and instead redistributing responsibilities in classrooms. This major shift in approach (and consequently in the student-teacher power arrangements) can produce a sense of disequilibrium and dissonance.*

In our experience it is the sense of disequilibrium and dissonance that shifting the balance of power in the classroom creates, that is the greatest potential barrier for teachers in implementing proper AFL. The implications of AfL reach beyond assessment and create pressure for reconceptualising the fundamental principles of effective teaching and learning. This is, in our view, a change that is necessary and, given, the rapidly shifting context in which education finds itself in these early decades of the Information Revolution, failure to adapt will simply render the prevailing role of the teacher as unnecessary.

(7) Useful Reading and YouTube Videos

Reading

<http://www.weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf>

<https://www.aaia.org.uk/content/uploads/2010/06/Assessment-for-Learning-10-principles.pdf>

<https://wncp.ca/media/40539/rethink.pdf>

<http://www.oecd.org/site/educeri21st/40600533.pdf>

Videos

[Assessment for Learning](#)

[Assessment of, for and as Learning](#)

[Assessment as Learning](#)

[Keeping Assessment Relevant and Authentic](#)

[Understanding Formative Assessments](#)

(8) References

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(NRDC) [Hodgen, J., Coben, D. & Rhodes, V. \(2009\) *Feedback, talk and engaging with learners: formative assessment in adult numeracy*. Research report. NRDC: London](#)

Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008) *Individual Learning Plans Guidance for assessment and learning* (No.2): QIA

Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008) *Assessment for learning Guidance for assessment and learning* (No.5): QIA, (p.8)

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