

Types of Formative Assessment

There is a large range of formative assessment methods available. This includes,

Question and Answer in the Lesson

This is perhaps the most commonly used method and is almost instinctive for teachers. It gives instant feedback, can be used to develop motivation but is largely ephemeral – that is to say that it is momentary and difficult to record.

Short Tests and Quizzes

These are either from textbooks or devised by the teacher. These are informal, can be fun and marks can be simply recorded. Used with care they can become part of every day teaching and learning.

Homework Exercises

These vary in purpose, design and complexity. 'Purpose' is the key word here. Students will make good use of homework if they feel it is useful, for example, preparation of material for a class discussion, seeing how a piece of writing ends, developing a skill, are all appealing tasks.

Skills Assessment using Formal Assessment Criteria

These may be the foundation for many skills-based courses. This method requires experience in 'on the hoof' assessment and systematic recording.

Observation of Performance

This is often used in the arts such as music and skill assessment such as team and leadership exercises. It needs expert and experienced assessors.

Assignments

This term spans a vast range of tasks but an example might be individual research assignments say for a group project. A very useful and increasingly used method, especially in conjunction with homework. May involve library and internet investigations, visits and interviews. Difficult to manage and assess.

Projects

Increasingly used in modern education as it is felt that developing your own learning material/methods gives you an 'ownership' of your own learning experience. The assessment methods of the various project components need careful design and clear communication to the students.

Written Questions / Exercises with Short, Extended or Multiple-choice Answers

Very widely used. Easy to design, mark and assess.

Simulations, Business Games

Almost guaranteed to produce lively learning sessions! Can teach a number of skills imaginatively and effectively. The better ones contain useful directions to possible methods of assessment. May well be time-consuming.

Conferencing / Reviews / Audit

This involves sitting down with learners and reviewing their written work/homework/progress in general. A very useful and beneficial process for teachers and students. Can be used to introduce care, involvement and motivation into the teacher-learner relationship. Three points to watch when operating it as a method.

1. It can be time consuming as you have to give all students a review session. (If you do not – those who are omitted will feel rejected!)
2. If you do it in class you must ensure that those not involved have something useful to be getting on with.
3. Make notes on student performance immediately after the review, not during it.