

ASSESSMENT, STANDARDS and LEARNING.

Making connections for teachers.

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Making Connections

The Board of Studies syllabuses advocate assessment that supports learning in a standards-reference framework.

Standards are defined as:

- what students are expected to learn
- and
- how well they have achieved.

Board syllabuses and support materials refer to Assessment for Learning.

Understanding AfL

"Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, and where they need to go and how best to get there."

(Assessment Reform Group 2002)

In short:

- * Collecting information on a student's achievement.
- * Using it to improve and progress their learning.

Standards

In NSW, the judgement '*Knowing where the learners are and where they need to go*' can be made by teachers in relation to the standards.

Understanding Standards

- * The NSW syllabuses state what students at each stage are expected to learn.
- * The A to E grade scale summarises how well students achieve at each grade by describing
 - the depth of knowledge and understanding
 - and
 - the range of skillsthat students working at that standard typically show.

Grade	Grade Descriptions
A	The student has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the content and can readily apply this knowledge. In addition, the student has achieved a very high level of competence in the processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.
B	The student has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the content and a high level of competence in the processes and skills. In addition, the student is able to apply this knowledge and these skills to most situations.
C	The student has a sound knowledge and understanding of the main areas of content and has achieved an adequate level of competence in the processes and skills.
D	The student has achieved a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.
E	The student has an elementary knowledge and understanding in few areas of the content and has achieved very limited competence in some of the processes and skills.

Taken together, syllabuses and the A to E grade scale show where the learner is expected to be and where they can progress to, and the quality of their performance.

Making Progress

'Knowing how best to get there' is a key professional skill.

- * What content, learning experiences and instruction will students need?

Teachers design and deliver appropriate learning programs.

Seeking Evidence

Teachers look for evidence that students are learning, understanding and demonstrating knowledge and skills.

Two key questions -

- * What evidence of learning is required?
- * How will this evidence be gathered?

Sound evidence can include information from:

- * planned assessment activities as part of learning process;
- * informal observations made in the classroom where appropriate.

Good assessment aims to be:

- * Valid - it is strongly connected to what is being learnt.
- * Reliable - information from the assessment can be trusted.
- * Manageable - it is not a burden to the teacher or student.

Examples of threats to good assessment:

- * An inappropriate task - last year's test used for this year's students when the learning content and skills have changed.
- * An activity that does not allow the range of students to show what they know - too easy, too hard, or closed.
- * Poor time allocation - an activity that takes too long or cannot be done in the time provided.
- * Bias - eg. a task that favours boys or tall people.
- * Inconsistent marking - marking criteria do not fit the task or are not applied consistently.
- * Disconnected assessment - 'there is so much assessment, I have no time for teaching!'

Interpreting Evidence

Sound evidence drawn from good assessment provides the basis for:

- * checking student understanding;
- * deciding the next learning steps;
- * reporting the status of learning.

Feedback

Meaningful feedback drawn from sound evidence is essential to help students in their learning.

Meaningful feedback aims to:

- * Foster motivation;
- * Promote understanding;
- * Help learners know how to improve;

- * Develop the capacity for self-assessment;
- * Recognize a variety of achievement.

Recording Evidence

As assessment in teaching and learning occurs teachers can choose to record aspects of students' performance to be used as evidence for reporting where a student is placed against standards.

- * Evidence can be recorded using a variety of codes eg. marks, grades, descriptors.
- * Teachers choose a code that best summarises the qualities of the work assessed.

Choosing Codes

Use the grade scale to allocate an A-E grade to individual pieces of work. In this approach a piece of work receiving an A meets the standard for an A described in the grade scale.

Use marks or grades to indicate the relative quality of individual pieces of work. In this approach a piece of work receiving a high mark may not necessarily meet the standard for an A described in the grade scale.

Making Judgements

Approach 1.

- * Use the grade scale to allocate grades to individual pieces of work.
- * Decide the final grade by weighing up all of the information collected and making an on-balance judgement as to the appropriate grade to award each student.

Approach 2.

- * Allocating marks or grades to individual pieces of work without reference to the grade scale.
- * Decide the final grade to be reported by aggregating the marks or grades for each student; ordering the students from top to bottom; decide by referring to the grade scale and work samples between which pairs of students the change from one grade to another occurs.

FAQs Approach 1

What if a student's results are not consistent?

eg. Task 1 C Task 2 A Task 3 B

Does this average to a C?

Answers to Consider.

Do results 2 and 3 represent the latest and fullest picture of achievement? If so they should carry more weight in your on-balance judgement?

FAQs Approach 2

Q. If a student's results add up to 90/100 should they automatically get an A?

Q. I put my students in order according to their marks and now I am worried that the order is not accurate. Student 10 has demonstrated grade A while student 9 is in the B range. What can I do?

Using the ARC.

Teachers can use work samples with their students to:

- * Discuss features of the samples and relate them to the work about to be done ... show them what good work looks like.
- * Compare students' work to that in the samples as part of providing feedback on how to improve.

Teachers can use ARC materials themselves or with colleagues to:

- * Build an understanding of the standards.
- * Assist in focusing their teaching and imparting that information to their students.