

Assessment Literacy

For students and staff

? What is assessment literacy

Assessment literacy has been defined as students' ability to understand the purpose and processes of assessment, and accurately judge their own work.¹

For Staff	For Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the principles of assessment.• Understanding key assessment terminology and different assessment methods.• Being familiar with the performance standards and criteria being used in a criterion-referenced assessment framework.• Having the ability to engage in self and peer assessment.• Being able to select and apply appropriate approaches and techniques to assessment tasks.• Being able to select appropriate assessment tasks that align to learning outcomes and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the purpose and process of assessment.• Using assessment to guide learning, study, and revision practice.• Understanding key assessment terminology and different assessment methods and procedures in the context of the University.• Being familiar with performance standards and criteria being used to judge your student work where assessment uses criteria and standards frameworks.• Being able to judge or evaluate your own and your peers' performances on assessment tasks marked by criteria and standards.

Why it's important



Improves student learning and assessment performance.



Ensures that assessment tasks are dependable and fairer representations of student achievement.



Alleviates student anxiety about assessment



Supports effective preparation for the assessment task



Being assessment literate is a threshold to further learning, deeper understanding and meaningful engagement with assessment tasks.

“Assessment literacy is an iterative process, and therefore course design and implementation should provide unhurried opportunities and time – within and across programmes – to develop complex knowledge and skills, and to create clear paths for progression.”

“Students need help to understand the principles of sound assessment, the relationship between assessment and learning, and the nature of personal judgment.”

Higher Education Academy. A Marked Improvement: transforming assessment in higher education. York, UK: Higher Education Academy, 2012.

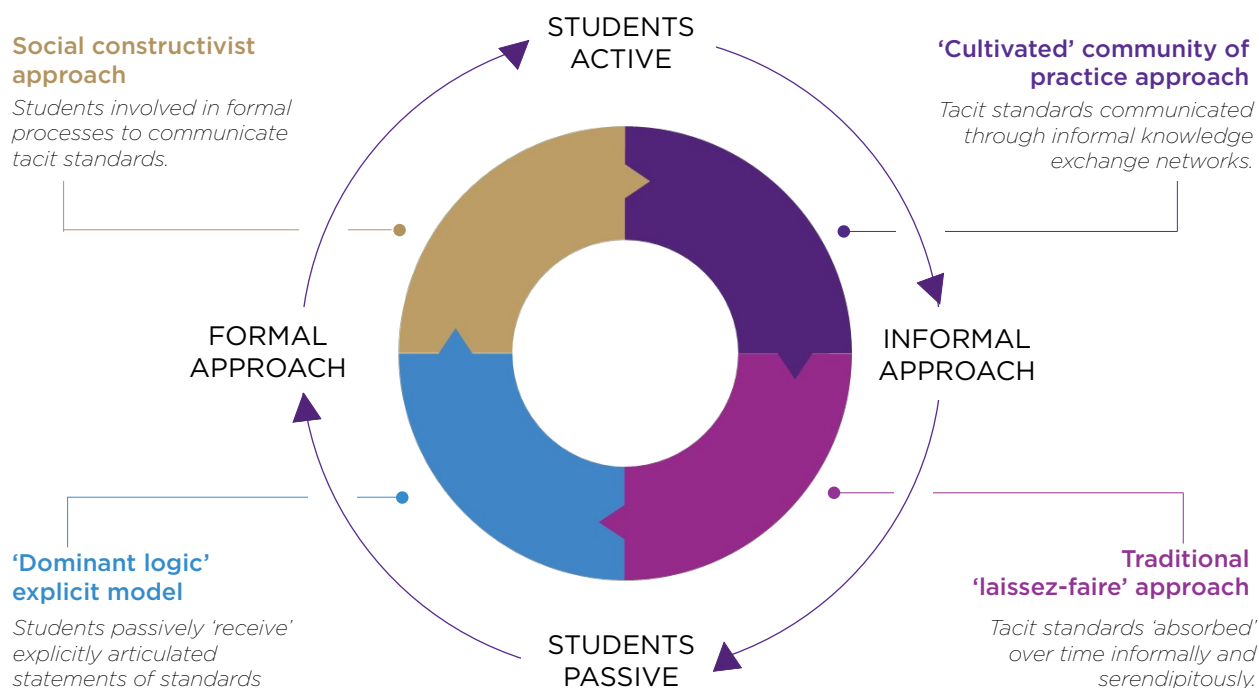


Figure 1 - Approaches to developing assessment literacy (after Price et al, 2012)

Assessment literacy can be developed in several ways as represented in Figure 1. However, strategies have differing degrees of effectiveness. For example, simply expecting students to develop their literacy through trial and error (i.e. traditional 'laissez faire' approach) is less effective than stating what is required by reference to the learning outcomes and assessment rubrics (i.e. the 'dominant logic' explicit model). Better yet, creating learning opportunities for students to come to understand assessment standards through use and application, so as to generate their own meaning (social constructivist approach).

Strategies might include practice marking exercises, small group discussions about criteria and standards, or the provision of exemplars. Fostering active involvement of all stakeholders by developing a 'cultivated community of practice' approach is a helpful way to ensure that students are contributing partners to assessment literacy strategies.

Personal Practice check



How am I communicating the assessment standards with the students



Are my students likely to have engaged in the type of assessments I have in my course? If not, what can I do to help them understand the purpose and process of this type of assessment?



What strategies can I introduce to enhance students' assessment literacy? E.g. providing examples and asking students to mark these using the rubric.

Example in practice:

In the UQ medical program we created OSCE videos with students that demonstrated a good performance and room for improvement and then provided students with the marking schemes to that they could judge the performance.

In these ways students learnt about the OSCE process as well as what would constitute a good performance.

This resource was supported with a recorded discussion of the features of an effective performance.



Further Reading

- 1. Smith C, Worsfold K, Davies L, et al. Assessment literacy and student learning: the case for explicitly developing students 'assessment literacy'. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 2013;38(1):44-60. doi: 10.1080/02602938.2011.598636
- 2. Price M, Rust C, O'Donovan B, et al. *Assessment literacy: The foundation for improving student learning*: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, Oxford Brookes University 2012.
- 3. Tai J, Ajjawi R, Boud D, et al. *Developing evaluative judgement: enabling students to make decisions about the quality of work*. Higher Education 2017 doi: 10.1007/s10734-017-0220-3
- 4. Higher Education Academy. *A Marked Improvement: transforming assessment in higher education*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy, 2012.

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