

# ADVICE ON ASSESSMENT



The new Board of Studies K–10 syllabuses for the Australian curriculum continue to promote a standards-referenced approach to assessing and reporting student achievement in NSW and the importance of assessment for, as and of learning as essential components of good teaching and learning.

## PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the broad name for the collection and evaluation of evidence of a student's learning. It is integral to teaching and learning and has multiple purposes. Assessment can enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly when it incorporates interaction with teachers, other students and a range of resources.

### Assessment:

- provides opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about student achievement in relation to outcomes
- enables students to demonstrate what they know and can do
- clarifies student understanding of concepts and promotes deeper understanding
- provides evidence that current understanding is a suitable basis for future learning.

### Assessment activities should:

- be valid and be based on syllabus outcomes
- include criteria to clarify for students what aspects of learning are being assessed
- enable students to demonstrate their learning in a range of different contexts
- be reliable, be free from bias and provide evidence that accurately represents a student's knowledge, understanding and skills

- enable students and teachers to use feedback effectively and reflect on the learning process
- be inclusive of and accessible to all students
- be part of an ongoing process where progress is monitored over time.

Teachers should consider the effect that assessment and feedback have on student motivation and self-esteem, and the importance of the active involvement of students in their own learning.

## USING SYLLABUS OUTCOMES IN STANDARDS-REFERENCED ASSESSMENT

Standards-referenced assessment refers to the process of collecting and interpreting information about students' learning. It uses syllabus outcomes as key reference points for decisions about students' progress and achievement.

### Syllabus outcomes:

- indicate the knowledge, understanding and skills expected to be acquired by most students by the end of a stage as a result of effective teaching and learning
- are derived from the syllabus objectives
- present a sequence of learning for each stage and take into account prior and subsequent learning of students
- are used by teachers to:
  - plan and develop learning and assessment opportunities
  - monitor student progress throughout each stage
  - assess and measure student achievement against intended learning at each stage
  - report student progress and achievement during, and at the end of, a stage.

### Standards-referenced assessment:

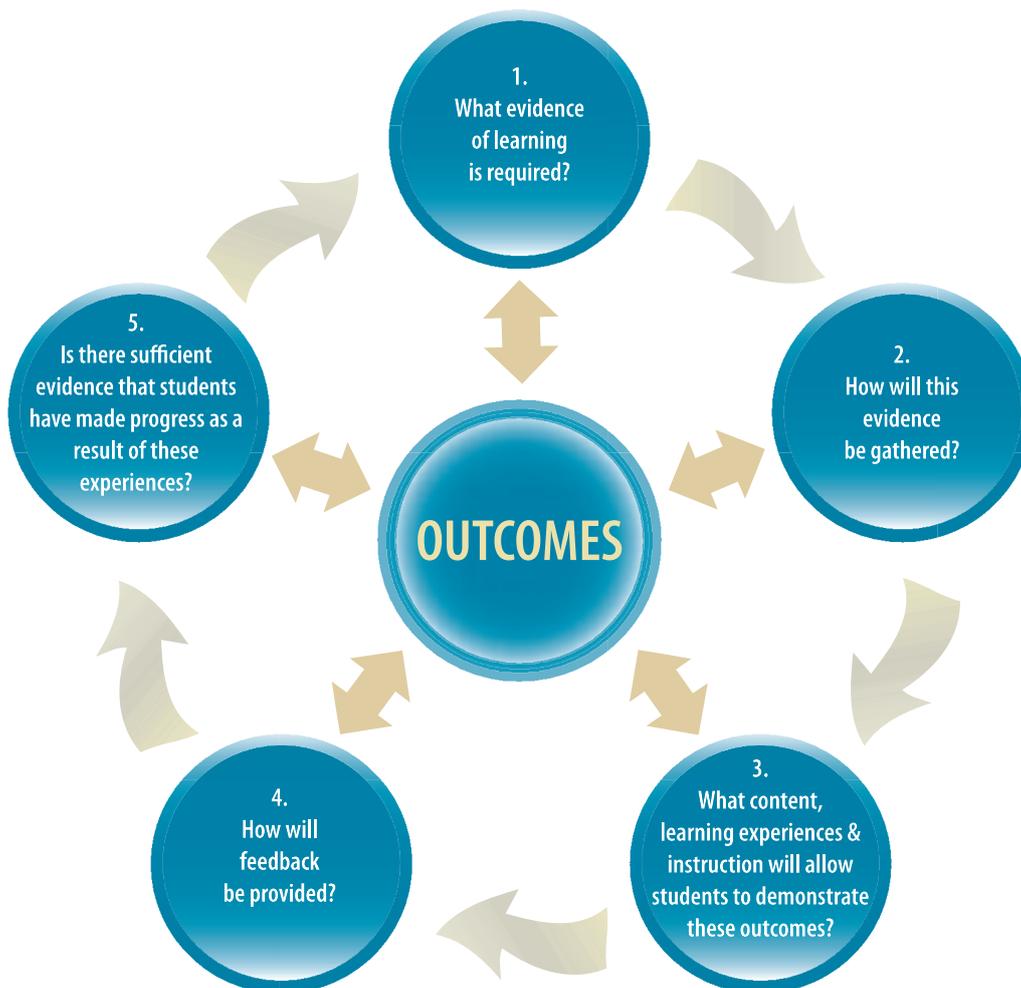
- links the achievement of students to specified standards, through evidence collected from a number and variety of activities and from observations over time
- involves teachers gathering evidence of student achievement formally and informally, to make judgements and to facilitate and monitor students' progress using syllabus outcomes.

### Standards describe:

- what students are expected to know, understand and do at each stage, described in NSW syllabuses through outcomes, content and stage statements
- how well students have achieved.

### This model for developing assessment activities emphasises:

- that outcomes are central to the decisions teachers make about teaching, learning and assessment
- the importance of gathering evidence about student learning in relation to the outcomes
- how teachers use evidence to determine how well students are achieving in relation to the outcomes
- the importance of teacher feedback and student reflection
- how evidence of student achievement informs future teaching and learning.



# ASSESSMENT FOR, AS AND OF LEARNING

NSW syllabuses and support materials promote an integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment. *Assessment for learning*, *assessment as learning* and *assessment of learning* are approaches that can be used individually or together, formally or informally, to gather evidence about student achievement and to improve student learning.

The principles of *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* strategies have some common elements.

*Assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* incorporate:

- self-assessment and peer assessment
- strategies for students to actively monitor and evaluate their own learning
- feedback, together with evidence, to help teachers and students decide whether students are ready for the next phase of learning or whether they need further learning experiences to consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills.

**Assessment for learning** involves teachers using evidence about students' knowledge, understanding and skills to inform their teaching. Sometimes referred to as 'formative assessment', it usually occurs throughout the teaching and learning process to clarify student learning and understanding.

*Assessment for learning:*

- reflects a view of learning in which assessment helps students learn better, rather than just achieve a better mark
- involves formal and informal assessment activities as part of learning and to inform the planning of future learning
- includes clear goals for the learning activity
- provides effective feedback that motivates the learner and can lead to improvement
- reflects a belief that all students can improve
- encourages self-assessment and peer assessment as part of the regular classroom routines
- involves teachers, students and parents reflecting on evidence
- is inclusive of all learners.

**Assessment as learning** occurs when students are their own assessors. Students monitor their own learning, ask questions and use a range of strategies to decide what they know and can do, and how to use assessment for new learning.

*Assessment as learning:*

- encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning
- requires students to ask questions about their learning
- involves teachers and students creating learning goals to encourage growth and development
- provides ways for students to use formal and informal feedback and self-assessment to help them understand the next steps in learning
- encourages peer assessment, self-assessment and reflection.

**Assessment of learning** assists teachers in using evidence of student learning to assess achievement against outcomes and standards. Sometimes referred to as 'summative assessment', it usually occurs at defined key points during a unit of work or at the end of a unit of work, term or semester and may be used to rank or grade students. The effectiveness of *assessment for learning* for grading or ranking depends on the validity and reliability of activities. Its effectiveness as an opportunity for learning depends on the nature and quality of the feedback.

*Assessment of learning:*

- is used to plan future learning goals and pathways for students
- provides evidence of achievement to the wider community, including parents, educators, the students themselves and outside groups
- provides a transparent interpretation across all audiences.

*Assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* approaches, in particular, help teachers and students to know if current understanding is a suitable basis for future learning. Teachers using their professional judgement in a standards-referenced framework are able to extend the process of *assessment for learning* into the *assessment of learning*.

## ADJUSTMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Teachers may need to make adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment practices for some students with special education needs so that they are able to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to syllabus outcomes and content. The types of adjustments made will vary, based on the needs of individual students.

These may be:

- adjustments to the assessment process, for example additional time, rest breaks, quieter conditions, or the use of a reader and/or scribe or specific technology
- adjustments to assessment activities, for example rephrasing questions or using simplified language, fewer questions or alternative formats for questions
- alternative formats for responses, for example written point form or notes, scaffolded structured responses, short objective questions or multimedia presentations.

## ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT ADVICE

Support materials will provide further advice about assessment, including:

- planning and designing effective teaching, learning and assessment activities
- sharing learning and assessment intentions
- providing effective feedback
- differentiating assessment
- integrating information and communication technologies (ICT)
- recording evidence for assessment.