

workshop

01

FOCUS ON LEARNING

LEARNING INTENTIONS
& **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

Note to Facilitators

What is the aim of this booklet?

This is part of a set of four booklets aimed at developing assessment practice for teachers in Ireland. The set of booklets and associated materials are intended to be used in a flexible way to allow teachers to explore a range of approaches which will enable them to develop a coherent approach to assessment. The materials are aimed at facilitating both whole staff discussion and subject-based discussion. Although primarily created for teachers involved in junior cycle developments, the material and approaches can be used across all sectors.

How do learning intentions and success criteria fit within the junior cycle?

It is important that learning intentions and success criteria link closely with the learning outcomes contained in the junior cycle specifications. In this way the ongoing formative assessment process is seen to complement and support the summative aspect of assessment within the junior cycle. See page 6 an example of how learning intentions, success criteria and an assessment task can be linked to learning outcomes.

How is the booklet to be used?

Schools may choose to use and adapt the material in any way to suit their own context. It is recommended that you start with the **slide presentation**. You may then find it helpful to follow the steps outlined below or you can develop your own workshop plan.

Where possible, we would encourage using the material on a school-wide basis as research evidence indicates that changes in assessment practice are more likely to become embedded if they are introduced on a systematic basis across a whole school.

If you are planning to facilitate a workshop with staff please consult the *Facilitator's Guide* which can be downloaded at www.juniorcycle.ie/assessment.

Page Legend



Worksheets

The following symbol is used throughout the booklet to show activities and worksheets that can be photocopied for use in a workshop.

Step 1

The slide presentation can be used to introduce *learning intentions* and *success criteria* to a whole staff group. The final slide in the Powerpoint contains some prompts for staff discussion based on the main messages of the presentation.

Step 2

Following the presentation it is recommended that staff view the short video of Dylan Wiliam talking about formative assessment.



Dylan Wiliam 'Formative Assessment'

(2 mins 18)

Prompt questions for staff discussion:

In the video Dylan Wiliam makes a number of statements about formative assessment.

Formative assessment means:

'Using information to adapt your teaching...to put the learning back on track'

'Taking constant readings about where learners are...and if the learning is not proceeding as planned making adjustments'

'Minute by minute, day by day.... allowing teachers to reflect on their practice'

Discuss how close these statements are to your own practice. What are the main challenges and benefits of introducing formative assessment practice in your classroom?



Step 3

Following on from these discussions you can now explore the workshop materials in this booklet. These activities can be approached and undertaken in any order that suits the school context, and it is not necessary or intended for them to be approached in the sequence presented in the booklet.

Step 4

Print off the discussion cards. These can be used to stimulate further discussion and thinking or they can be displayed around the school to reinforce the key messages and to help staff to further develop their practice in this area.

Encourage staff to engage with the material included in the recommended reading section.

What are learning intentions and success criteria?

What are learning intentions?

A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, that describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of learning and teaching activities. Clear learning intentions should help students focus not just on the task or activity taking place but on what they are learning. Learning intentions are always linked to one or more learning outcomes in the specification.

What are success criteria?

Success criteria are linked to learning intentions. They are developed by the teacher and/or the student and describe what success looks like. They help the teacher and student to make judgements about the quality of student learning.

Why should I use learning intentions and success criteria?

Despite building learning intentions into our planning documents, we are not always good at sharing learning intentions and success criteria with our students. At the same time, we want our students to be self-motivated and have a sense of purpose.

So...why would we want to keep the learning intentions **a secret** from our students?

The value of learning intentions and success criteria

Research shows that students who regularly receive this information in the classroom are

- more focused for longer periods of time
- more motivated and active in their learning
- better able to take responsibility for their own learning.



So it is really important that we share learning intentions with our students!

To give our students the tools they need to take more responsibility for their own learning and achieve greater learning independence, we need to communicate to them

- what they are going to learn
- why they should learn it in the first place
- how they will recognise when they have succeeded.

Can we be clear about the terminology?

The use of learning intentions is not new. Teachers also use the term 'learning objectives' or 'learning aims' to share the learning with their students. The term 'learning intentions' is used within these materials because it puts greater emphasis on the **process** of learning rather than the end product. The use of the term 'learning intentions' is also used in other NCCA publications, including the NCCA Guidelines for Primary Schools – Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum.

Will this support the development of Key Skills?

When teachers share with students what they will be learning (the learning intention) and what they are looking for in their students' work (success criteria) this supports students in developing the skill of managing themselves. They will also develop other key skills such as communicating (as they give and receive feedback) and the skill of staying well as they become more confident and positive about their learning.

[Download the key skills framework for more detail.](#)

Making the link between learning outcomes, learning intentions and success criteria

Here is an example of how a teacher developed learning intentions, success criteria and an assessment task linked to learning outcomes for Junior Cycle English. Further examples are available on www.curriculumonline.ie

Write a book review – 1st Year

Learning outcomes

Oral Language

5. Deliver a short oral text, alone and/or in collaboration with others, using appropriate language, style and visual content for specific audiences and chosen purpose.

Reading

4. Use an appropriate critical vocabulary while responding to literary texts.
5. Engage in sustained private reading as a pleasurable and purposeful activity, applying what they have learned about the effectiveness of spoken and written texts to their own experience of reading.

Writing

4. Write competently in a range of text forms, for example, report, multi-modal text, review, blog, using appropriate vocabulary, tone and a variety of styles to achieve a chosen purpose for different audiences.
7. Respond imaginatively in writing to their texts showing a critical appreciation of language, style and content, choice of words, language patterns, tone, images.

Learning Intention

We are learning to read books for enjoyment, and to express that enjoyment through a well-constructed review of a chosen book.

Task

A **reading project** for first year students runs for 6 to 8 weeks. Students read from a list of prescribed books. Students are organised in reading groups (4/5 students in each group). Each group agrees the book to be read and reading takes place in class and at home. Four books are read in total by each group.

At the end of the group work the individual students choose a book they enjoyed and write a review. The review can be included in the student's portfolio of writing and can also be used as the basis for an oral presentation.

Success criteria

- Shows understanding of the chosen genre or form
 - Knowledge of the text under review
 - Conveys enthusiasm for the text (or the opposite)
 - Uses references well without giving away too much
 - Adopts an appropriate critical stance
 - Makes a clear recommendation
- Expresses ideas fluently, imaginatively, and with control of expression
- Writing displays mechanical competence

Alternatively, these criteria could be expressed in student-friendly language, e.g.:

- I show a good knowledge of the book
- I convey my enthusiasm for the text (or show clearly the parts I don't like)
- I express my ideas fluently and choose the right words and phrases most of the time
- My writing is accurate with correct spelling and grammar

Learning
Outcomes

Learning
Intentions

Success
Criteria



Activity 1

Learning Intentions... How are we doing?

Work either individually or with a partner and discuss how well you have developed your classroom practice in using learning intentions.

Traffic light your responses to the questions below using this code:

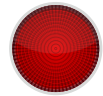
Always



Sometimes



Never



I set learning intentions with my students

I make sure that the learning intentions are in student friendly language

I use words associated with learning

I make sure the learning intention is clear and links to the big picture i.e. the purpose of the learning.

I use SMART learning intentions – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-limited.

I re-visit learning intentions during the lesson and at the end of the lesson

Activity 2: From doing to learning

When discussing learning intentions it is important to focus on what students would have learnt by the end of the lesson or activity i.e. what is the learning they should retain and take away with them.

Look at the activities below and see how they have been developed into learning intentions. Think of an activity that you would use in one of your classes and decide how this might be developed into a number of learning intentions.

Share your ideas with your partner:

Learning activity

To plan an investigation to determine the relative effectiveness of baking soda as an antacid treatment.

Give a speech for or against capital punishment

Work in a group to design a leaflet to promote healthy eating

Now have a go yourself by starting with an activity you would use in your own class and produce some learning intentions. You may find it helpful to refer back to some of the questions in Activity 1 as a guide

Remember that learning intentions need to be broad enough so that they do not limit the opportunities for a wide range of learning experiences.

Also keep in mind that a learning intention or set of learning intentions might carry forward for more than one lesson.

Learning intentions

To be able to:

- Write a testable hypothesis
 - Decide on the most appropriate methods for conducting an investigation
 - Explain how reliability, fairness and safety have been considered
-

To be able to:

- Present a point of view in a persuasive way
-

To be able to:

- Work effectively in a group
 - Agree the key messages that should be included
 - Consider most effective ways to visually communicate the messages
-



Activity 2

From doing to learning

Use this worksheet to develop some learning intentions based on classroom activities you are planning.

Activity	Learning Intention



Activity 3

Success Criteria... How are we doing?

Work either individually or with a partner and discuss how well you have developed your classroom practice in setting success criteria.

Traffic light your responses to the questions below using this code:

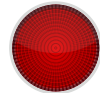
Always



Sometimes



Never



When I set assignments I share success criteria with my students

The success criteria are linked to the learning intention

The success criteria are specific and concrete

The success criteria are clearly understood by the students

I discuss the success criteria with the students and we agree them together

I use the success criteria for tasks as the basis for giving students feedback on those tasks

I use the success criteria to support peer and/or student self-assessment

I re-visit success criteria during the lessons

.....

Activity 4: From learning intentions to success criteria

.....

The examples below show how you might move from learning intentions to developing criteria for success.

Learning intentions	Success criteria
<p>To be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a testable hypothesis 2. Decide on the most appropriate methods for conducting an investigation 3. Explain how reliability, fairness and safety have been considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates, discusses, and chooses interesting questions to investigate • Uses scientific ideas to make testable predictions • Suggests more than one way to investigate the question • Identifies the variables in the investigation • Explains the predicted relationships between the variables • Identifies and justifies the most appropriate way to investigate • Conducts a risk assessment of the proposed method and outlines necessary safety precautions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies the most appropriate data-gathering instruments to record reliable data - Acknowledges the limitations on the precision of the data to be recorded
<p>To be able to:</p> <p>Present a point of view in a persuasive manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with a good opening sentence • Present reasons and examples to back up your argument • Use emotive and persuasive language (such as 'Surely') • Use humour, stories and/or questions to gain your audience's attention • Conclude with a strong statement • Look at your audience



Activity 4

From learning intentions to success criteria

Use one of the learning intentions you developed in the previous activity and now write some related success criteria. Share and discuss your example with your partner.

Learning Intention	Success Criteria

Planning our Next Steps

This workshop will hopefully have helped you develop your thinking about the use of learning intentions and success criteria in your classroom.

You are now asked to identify a couple of areas where you would like to improve your practice in setting learning intentions/success criteria. You may find it useful to refer to the traffic light questions on the previous pages as a guide.

If you have not used learning intentions and success criteria before you are advised to start in a small focussed way. You should plan the change in practice perhaps with one class in the first instance. Many teachers find that it is useful to discuss their experience of learning intentions and success criteria with other teachers and keep a log of any difficulties that they encounter. It will also be important to share with your students why you are changing your practice and how it will benefit their learning. Some teachers have also found it helpful to discuss the changes with parents.



Activity

Use the planning sheet attached to set out how you intend to take forward the development of learning intentions/success criteria in your classroom over the next 3 months.

It might be useful to start to plan your development focussing on a small number of areas which you have identified as 'red' during the traffic-light audit.



Planning Next Steps: Planning Sheet

Timescale/Class	Main area for development	Observations/Reflections

Questions to consider in a subject department meeting

A school may decide to focus on Assessment as its third area for SSE. In particular, it could decide to focus on formative assessment. The following questions would be useful prompts to help gather evidence at subject department level about current practice in relation to formative assessment. The results of the deliberations on such questions could feed into whole staff discussion and ultimately help the school identify its strengths and areas for development in relation to formative assessment, which should then inform the school improvement plan.

What do I/we understand by the terms 'learning intention' and 'success criteria'?

How can I/we share examples of learning intentions and success criteria with each other?

How can we use learning intentions and success criteria to help us in planning for assessment within this subject?

How can we involve students in setting success criteria within this subject?

How do we provide opportunities for students to assess their own and each other's work against agreed criteria?

See also *School Self Evaluation – Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*, (DES), p. 44-45.

Discussion Cards

The discussion cards can be cut out and used to stimulate small group discussion as part of a whole-staff meeting or a subject planning meeting.

Discussion Card 1

Learning intentions that focus on knowledge

Thinking about the different kinds of knowledge that you wish your students to learn:

- Knowledge about a particular topic (know about different types of equations)
- Knowledge of how something is done, of the steps involved in producing something (know how the Spire of Dublin was constructed)
- Knowledge of why something happens (know why voting patterns change across age ranges)
- Knowledge of what causes something to happen (know what causes thunderstorms)

Develop some learning intentions on **knowledge** for one of your own classes using this guide

Discussion Card 2

Learning intentions that focus on skills

In developing learning intentions that focus on skills you might find it helpful to start with the words 'to be able to' followed by a verb.

For example

- To be able to write a summary
- To be able to solve a problem using more than one technique
- To be able to work as a member of a team
- To be able to identify persuasive strategies used in a speech
- To be able to experiment with a range of graphic techniques in order to achieve a stated effect

Develop some learning intentions on **skills** for one of your own classes using this guide

Discussion Card 3

Learning intentions that focus on understanding

Teachers need to develop the understanding of their students by building on their previous knowledge. For instance, a student might be able to list the signs of global warming - thereby showing knowledge of them and might also be able to list some impacts of global warming. However, understanding requires that the student builds on his/her knowledge and comes to an understanding of the wider causes and consequences of climate change.

Understanding, then builds on the acquisition of knowledge and in designing learning intentions, teachers ensure that students are exposed to this type of deeper learning.

For example

- Understand the causes of the Easter Rising
- Understand the effects of a balanced diet on health
- Understand how using emotive language can influence an audience
- Understand what are the most reliable internet sites to be used for research purposes
- Understand links between poverty and conflict

Develop some learning intentions on **understanding** for one of your own classes using this guide above

Discussion Card 4

Success Criteria

To recap then...

- Good success criteria are closely linked to the learning intention.
- They should be easy to understand and written in student friendly language
- They should be discussed and agreed with students prior to undertaking the activity
- They should focus on specific features of the work that are going to be assessed and on what the student is learning rather than what he/she is doing.

Keeping the above points in mind, discuss each of the following success criteria and decide whether they would be helpful for the student. Suggest changes to improve those that are less helpful.

- I am looking for an essay written with a short introductory paragraph and closing paragraph. In addition all the paragraphs except the first paragraph should start with a clear linking sentence.

- I am looking for everyone to produce a portrait.
- I am looking for you to record the results of the experiment accurately and explain the patterns using your previous knowledge.
- I am looking for you to use tone, pitch and dynamics to reflect mood of the poem.
- I am looking for a computer generated pie-chart showing the differences between female and male preferences based on all the data from all of the newspapers provided.
- I am looking for everyone to achieve at least 8 out of 10 correct answers.
- I am looking for you to show how you can check your prediction of the area by measuring and finding out if some of the shapes are bigger than others or if they take up the same amount of area.

Discussion Card 5

Log onto www.juniorcycle.ie and go to Key Skills videos. Then under the heading 'Communicating' click on the [English/Media Studies](#) example.



Junior Cycle English/Media studies
(4 mins 12 sec)

Watch how this teacher sets a clear learning intention and provides criteria for success.

Discuss

What else do you notice about this lesson? What are the elements that make it successful? Is there anything you would do differently?

Discussion Card 6

Sometimes teachers ask

'Do I have to do this for every lesson or class?' How will I find the time?

Or they might say

'I write up the Learning Intention each day but it doesn't really mean much to the students.'

Discuss

How can you ensure that this practice is both manageable and meaningful?

Posters

The following pages contain posters that can be used as part of a workshop to reinforce the activities in this booklet.



Learning Intentions

The benefits

The quality
of work
improves

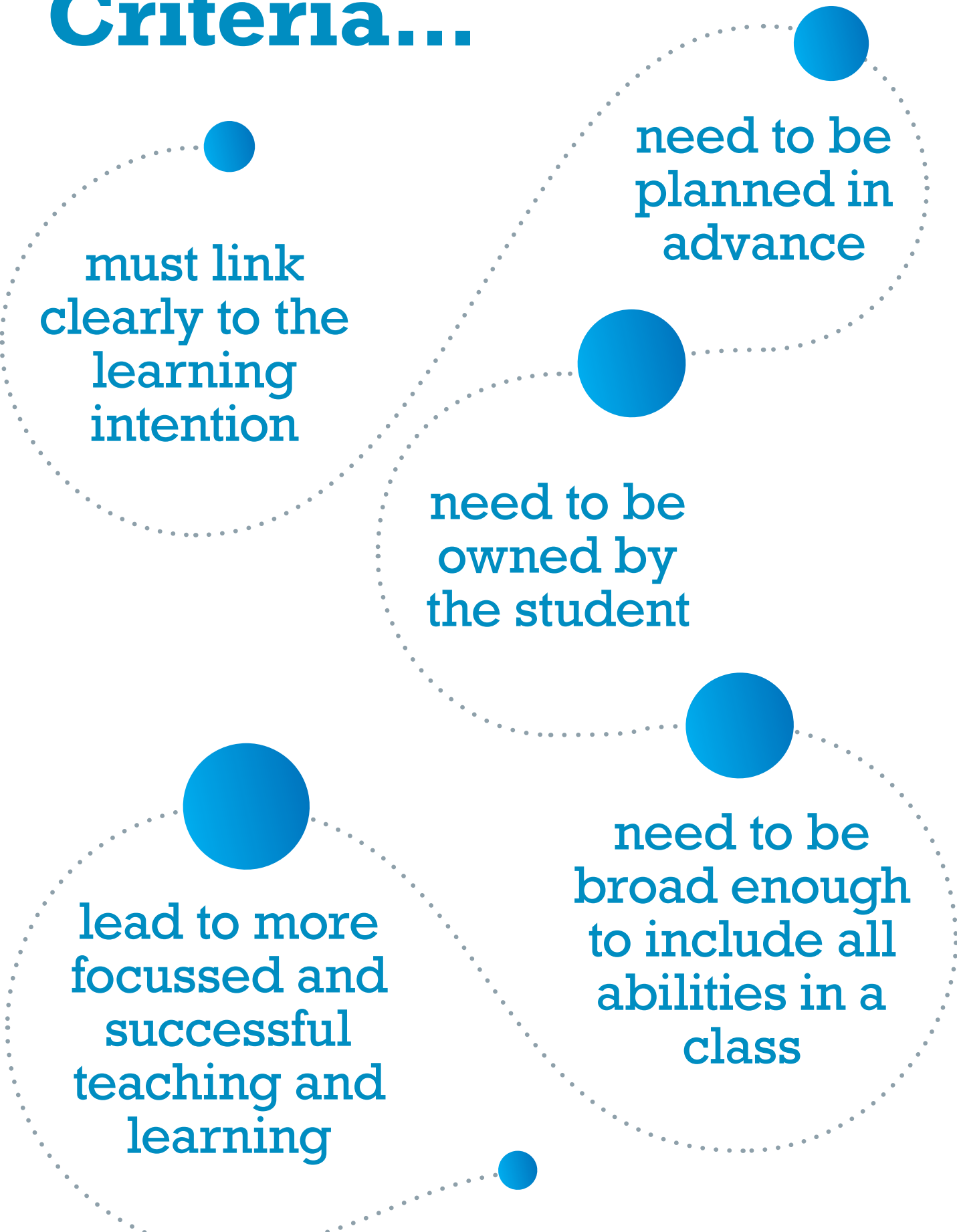
Behaviour
will improve

Students will
become more
focussed on tasks
and persevere
for longer

There is rich
teacher-student
dialogue.

Feedback
is easier

Success Criteria...



must link
clearly to the
learning
intention

need to be
planned in
advance

need to be
owned by
the student

lead to more
focussed and
successful
teaching and
learning

need to be
broad enough
to include all
abilities in a
class

Glossary

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements in curriculum specifications to describe the understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning.

Learning Intentions

A learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement, created by the teacher, that describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of learning and teaching activities.

Success Criteria

Success criteria are linked to learning intentions. They are developed by the teacher and/or the student and describe what success *looks like*. They help the teacher and student to make judgements about the quality of student learning.

Ongoing Assessment

As part of their classroom work, students engage in assessment activities that can be either formative or summative in nature. Teachers assess as part of their daily practice by observing and listening as students carry out tasks, by looking at what they write and make, and by considering how they respond to, frame and ask questions. Teachers use this assessment information to help students plan the next steps in their learning. Periodically this assessment will be in more structured, formalised settings where teachers will need to obtain a snapshot of the students' progress in order to make decisions on future planning and to report on progress. This may involve the students in doing projects, investigations, case studies and/or tests and may occur at defined points in the school calendar.

Formative Assessment

Assessment is formative when either formal or informal procedures are used to gather evidence of learning during the learning process, and used to adapt teaching to meet student needs. The process permits teachers and students to collect information about student progress, and to suggest adjustments to the teacher's approach to instruction and the student's approach to learning. Assessment for learning covers all of the aspects of formative assessment but has a particular focus on the student having an active role in his/her learning.

Summative Assessment

Assessment is summative when it is used to evaluate student learning at the end of the instructional process or of a period of learning. The purpose is to summarise the students' achievements and to determine whether and to what degree the students have demonstrated understanding of that learning by comparing it against agreed success criteria or features of quality.

Features of Quality

Features of quality are the statements in the subject specifications that are used in making judgements about the quality of student work for the purpose of awarding achievement grades for certification. As success criteria are closely linked to learning intentions and based on the day-to-day processes in the classroom, student learning will gradually come to reflect the requirements set out in the features of quality which are used for certification purposes.

Further Reading

Assessment: The Bridge between Teaching and Learning (Dylan Wiliam, 2013)

Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment (Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, Kings College, London, 1998)

Embedded Formative Assessment (Dylan Wiliam, Solution Tree 2011)

Formative Assessment in Action (Shirley Clarke, Hodder Murray, 2005)

Assessment for Learning: Putting it into practice (Paul Black, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall and Dylan Wiliam, OUP, 2003)

Working Inside the Black Box (Paul Black, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall and Dylan Wiliam, Kings College, London, 2002)

Mathematics Inside the Black Box (Jeremy Hodgen and Dylan Wiliam, NferNelson, 2006)

English Inside the Black Box (Bethan Marshall and Dylan Wiliam, NferNelson, 2006)

Assessment for Learning: Mark less to achieve more (Ian Smith, Learning Unlimited, 2003)

Science Inside the Black Box (NferNelson, 2006)

Visible learning for teachers: Maximising impact on learning (John Hattie, Routledge 2012)

Useful Websites

[Assessment Toolkit](#)

[Key Skills videos](#)

[Watch this example of a teacher setting a clear learning intention and criteria for success](#)

[Dylan Wiliam's website](#)

[Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment](#)

[Kings College Assessment Group](#)

Credit: NCCA wishes to acknowledge and express gratitude to The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland (www.rewardinglearning.org.uk) and Education Scotland (www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk) for use of materials in these booklets.



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