

Formative Assessment and Feedback Activities:

A tutors' guide

Assessment and Feedback Working Group



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Introduction.

This guide consists of a series of suggested formative assessment and feedback activities drawn from a range of tutors across departments, as part of the activities of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group. These activities can be tweaked and used for modules that are practice-based, assessed by coursework, or exam-focused.

There are ten suggested activities, which tutors might find useful for their seminar session, discipline, topic, or the reason for assessment.

Ideas include ways to assess:

- Reading;
- Academic writing;
- Academic referencing;
- Students' understanding of how to read and apply key concepts and theories;
- Students' clarity around key assessment criteria.

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How to use this guide and the accompanying PowerPoint:

- As a basis for training or discussion of formative assessment and feedback, as a group of tutors;
- To tweak and add slides to seminar PowerPoints;
- As a starting point for your own teaching ideas.

If some of these ideas do not work for you, just skip them and look through the others.

If you use these ideas with students:

- Consider putting the activity instructions on a slide and heading the slide 'Formative Assessment and Feedback'.
- Explain explicitly that whilst the work is not intended to form part of their summative assessment (i.e., their final grade), you are using the activity to assess their understanding so far and to give feedback on their thoughts and ideas.
- Use the exercises to inform yourself about what you need to explain or re-teach before students start their summative (graded) assessment, as well as to help students improve their own work. If you look at written work as part of your formative assessment activity, you can draw out common themes in students' misconceptions and address these as a whole-class issue.
- Depending on your discipline, you could tweak the suggestions to ask students to submit practical responses/activities/artefacts instead of written work.

Remember:

- Peer assessments can be formative assessment and feedback.
- Class discussions can be formative assessment and feedback.
- Formative assessment and feedback do not have to involve 'marking' written work.
- Flag up to students whenever you do something which functions as formative assessment and feedback.
- You are probably doing it already, but student may not have recognized it.

Activity 1: Key words.

- To check understanding following a lecture or reading, students individually list key words (theoretical concepts, for example) from the lecture or reading.
- Share the key words as a whole class discussion. Write a list of key words on the board or visualizer.
- Groups of three or four students take three or four key words each and write definitions, using references from the reading.
- Students share the definitions with the class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.
- Extension: You could get students to take notes and add to them to a forum on the VLE page each week to create a glossary of terms.

Activity 2: Concept cards.

Use this activity to check understanding of key ideas or learning objectives delivered throughout the module:

- Create a set of cards, each one having a key concept written on it.
- Divide the class into groups of four or five and give each group a card.
- Ask each group of students to divide a blank page into four and number each quarter.
 - In box 1, students should brainstorm the concept on their card with a spidergram or list.
 - In box 2, students should note questions about the concept.
 - In box 3, students should note problems relating to the concept.
 - In box 4, students should note an example of the concept in use (i.e., an applied example).
- Students can meet with another group and share their ideas.
- Students share their discussions as a whole class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.

Activity 3: Insight / Resource / Application.

Use this activity too check understanding following a lecture or reading:

- **Insight:** Students should write three one-sentence bullet-points that represent new understandings about the meaning or nature of the topic of the lecture or reading.
- **Resource:** Students should write one other idea from the module or another module that amplifies the lecture or reading: How does it help you to analyse the reading?
- **Application:** Students should write a few sentences explaining how the lecture reading can inform further studies or work.
- Students can then share their ideas with a colleague.
- Students share their discussions as a whole class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.
- **Extension:** Students can give you their written work. Read and comment on the written work to assess understanding and give feedback on good analyses or to address misconceptions. Hand the work back the following week, reminding students that this is 'feedback' on their developing understanding. You could reassure them that you are not assessing academic writing - just their ideas. This can sometimes free students up to think about concepts rather than being paralysed with worry about their grammar (there are other activities for this!).
- **Alternatively:** Give students a copy of the grade criteria and ask them to mark their own or a peer's writing, giving reasons drawn from the criteria. You could then comment on their marking.

Activity 4: Summarise and analyse.

Use this activity to check understanding of the reading for the session.

- Assign students to choose one or two paragraphs of the reading each – either during or before class.
- Students should summarise their paragraph(s) in three sentences.
- In class, students can share the summaries in pairs and give peer feedback.
- Students share their discussions as a whole class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.
- Extension: Ask students to add their summaries to a shared document about the reading on the VLE.

Activity 5: Apply a theory.

Use this activity to check understanding of the reading for the session, and of other ideas or theories introduced earlier in the module and to assess academic writing and referencing.

- Ask students to summarise the five main points of the assigned reading – either during or before class. This can be recorded on a poster with illustrations or bullet points, as a written paragraph with references, or as a discussion with notes.
- Working in pairs, using the summaries, ask students to choose one of the theories or ideas discussed or read about in a previous session. How does it relate to the current reading?
- Students share their discussions as a whole class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.
- **Extension:** If you asked students to bring written paragraphs to class, you could ask them to hand in their written work. Read and comment on the written work to assess understanding and give feedback on good analyses or to address misconceptions. You could also give feedback on referencing conventions and/or academic writing. Hand the work back the following week, reminding students that this is ‘feedback’ on their developing understanding.
- **Alternatively:** Give students a copy of the grade criteria and ask them to mark their own or a peer’s writing, giving reasons drawn from the criteria. You could then comment on their marking.

Activity 6: Book oracles.

Use this activity to:

- Get students into important texts.
 - Check understanding of ideas or theories introduced in the module.
 - Assess academic writing and referencing.
- Bring a pile of ten or so texts to class. These could be drawn from your favourite books/your discipline's seminal books or articles/some problematizing texts/newspaper articles about your topic.
 - Put students in groups of three or four and ask each group to choose a text.
 - Students in each group should take turns to ask either 'a big life question' or a question about your topic.
 - The question asker should shut their eyes, open the text and find a sentence at random.
 - The small group should work together to interpret the answer to the question using the random sentence chosen.
 - Share the questions and answers as a class.
 - Students share their discussions as a whole class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.
 - **Extension:** You could get students to write up their question and answer as a referenced paragraph. Read and comment on the written work to assess understanding and give feedback on good analyses or to address misconceptions. You could also give feedback on referencing conventions and/or academic writing. Hand the work back the following week, reminding students that this is 'feedback' on their developing understanding.
 - **Alternatively:** Give students a copy of the grade criteria and ask them to mark their own or a peer's writing, giving reasons drawn from the criteria. You could then comment on their marking.

Activity 7: Developing a focus for assessment.

Use this activity to:

- Check understanding of what is required for a piece of practice-based or written coursework or exam essay.
 - Remind students of the criteria for the summative (final graded) assessment for your module.
 - Get students into pairs and ask them to discuss their approach to the essay/activity/artefact (e.g., which question/topic will they choose? What is their theoretical approach going to be?)
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- Ask students to draft an outline or plan for their artefact/essay with headings and two or three bullet points under each heading.
 - Students can then read each others' plans/outlines and give feedback.
 - Have a class discussion to identify misconceptions and to work out what you need to reteach to ensure all students understand what is needed for the assessment.
 - Extension: Ask students to hand in their plans/outlines. Read and comment on them to assess understanding and give feedback on good analyses or to address misconceptions. Hand the work back the following week, reminding students that this is 'feedback' on their developing understanding.

Nb. You could make a pro forma for students to fill in, including a reminder of each element of the criteria and a space for them to add notes about how they intend to fulfil each element. Please refer to the [PowerPoint file](#) on Goldsmiths Teaching and Learning website for an exemplar pro forma.

Activity 8: Find a quote.

Use this activity to:

- Check understanding of the reading for the session
 - Assess academic writing
 - Look at how students apply their theory to their practice or data
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- Ask students to find a good quote from the reading.
 - Before class or in class, get them to write a short paragraph including the quote and commenting on it in relation to their practice or research data. Students should also find a quote from the article which they do not agree with. In relation to their practice or data, ask them to write a second short paragraph including the quote.
 - Students can then read each others' paragraphs and give feedback.
 - Have a class discussion to identify misconceptions and good ideas.
 - **Extension:** Ask students to hand in their paragraphs. Read and comment on them to assess understanding and give feedback on good analyses or to address misconceptions. You could also give feedback on academic writing and referencing. Hand the work back the following week, reminding students that this is 'feedback' on their developing understanding.
 - **Alternatively:** Give students a copy of the grade criteria and ask them to mark their own or a peer's writing, giving reasons drawn from the criteria. You could then comment on their marking.

Activity 9: Circular discussions.

Use this activity to:

- Check understanding of the reading for the session, or of a lecture.
 - Look at how students apply theory to practice or data.
 - Assess class discussion and listening skills.
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- Put a question about the activity/practice/reading/lecture up on the board
 - Get students into groups of five or six.
 - Moving clockwise, students take a turn responding to the question.
 - Each subsequent student should start with a summary of the preceding person's comment, and connect what they have to say with what they have just heard.
 - The discussion should go round the circle twice.
 - Students share their discussions as a whole class. Use this discussion to assess understanding and give feedback on good definitions or to address misconceptions.

Activity 10: Audience response systems.

Use this activity to:

- Check understanding of the reading for the session, of a lecture, or as an introduction to a topic.
- Check knowledge of facts.
- Assess the ways in which students back up their opinions with theory/the literature.

There are several free online response systems such as Mentimeter, Kahoot! or Socrative. They are easy to use and they enable you to check on prior learning and ongoing understanding. They can also be great revision tools.

Students use smart devices such as mobile phones, tablets or laptops to access online choice-based games, quizzes or surveys. You can use each question and answer as the basis for class discussion. Visit the links below for demonstrations of:

[Mentimeter](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdgQVjQuk44_FnV9jJ3N0CA) (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdgQVjQuk44_FnV9jJ3N0CA)

[Socrative](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upY8uG3NFFY) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upY8uG3NFFY)

[Kahoot](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XzfWHdDS9Q) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XzfWHdDS9Q)

These systems are all easy to use, but Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TaLIC) particularly recommends Mentimeter because one can easily insert the polling into PowerPoint presentations and it has added functions such as creating response word clouds.