Plan and conduct assessment

Department of Education
Plan and conduct assessment
A module of the Advanced Certificate: Education (School Management and Leadership)

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**Advanced Certificate: Education
(School Management and Leadership)**

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Acronyms and abbreviations used in the programme

AC   Assessment Criteria
ACE   Advanced Certificate: Education
AGM   Annual General Meeting
CCFO   Critical cross-field outcome
CHE   Council on Higher Education
DoE   Department of Education
DSG   Development Support Group
EMD   Education Management Development
ETQA   Education and Training Quality Assurance body
HEQC   Higher Education Quality Committee
INSET   In-service Education and Training
IQMS   Integrated Quality Management System
NCS   National Curriculum Statement
NLRD   National Learners' Records Database
NQF   National Qualifications Framework
OBA   Outcomes-Based Assessment
OBE   Outcomes-Based Education
PGP   Personal Growth Plan
PoE   Portfolio of Evidence
RPL   Recognition of Prior Learning
SACE   South African Council of Educators
SAQA   South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA   South African University Vice-Chancellors' Association
SDT   Staff Development Team
SGB   School Governing Body
SGB   Standards Generating Body
SMT   School Management Team
SO   Specific Outcome
US   Unit Standard

Overview

Word of welcome

Welcome to every student who has registered for this elective module on planning and conducting assessment. We trust that you will find this module informative and challenging and that it will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to effectively and efficiently manage assessment in your institution, whether this be at classroom, departmental or institutional level.

What this module is about

According to Ruth Sutton, an overseas assessment specialist, 'assessment is a human process, conducted by and with human beings, and subject inevitably to human judgement' (Sutton, 1994:2). In this sense, assessment is a form of communication, one in which learners communicate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to the assessor and the assessor communicates his/her judgments about the learner's competence to the learner and other stakeholders.

Assessment of children's learning and progress is central to effective teaching and learning. A report on Assessment and Testing, cited by Sutton, categorically states that:

> 'Promoting children's learning is a principal aim of schools. Assessment lies at the heart of this process. It can provide a framework in which educational objectives may be set, and pupils' progress charted and expressed. It can yield a basis for planning the next educational steps in response to children's needs. By facilitating dialogue between teachers, it can enhance professional skills and help the school as a whole to strengthen learning across the curriculum and throughout its age range.'

(Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing, cited in Sutton, 1994:2)

In South Africa, many teachers were agitated and confused by the change from content-based to 'outcomes-based' assessment (OBA) and the subsequent increase of administrative tasks associated with this change. According to many teachers, OBA took them away from 'the core business of their profession, which is to teach!' It is therefore not surprising that many teachers are relatively negative about 'outcomes-based assessment', or OBA, as it is more commonly known. Also, if the principle of learner-centredness – Spady's 'expanded opportunities' – is applied, assessment would be an administrative nightmare because each child's individual learning style and tempo would have to be catered for in the assessment process and/or instruments. Is this perhaps why written assessments are still the norm in the majority of schools?

To add to the stress generated by these changes, expectations of what teachers are supposed to do and be have also changed. According to the *Norms and Standards for Educators (RSA 2000)*, all teachers should be able to effectively and efficiently perform at least seven roles, one of which is the role of *assessor*. In terms of this role, competent teachers understand that assessment is 'an essential feature of the teaching and learning process' and demonstrate this understanding by *integrating* assessment into teaching and learning as a matter

of course. By implication, they know what the 'purposes, methods and effects of assessment' are and are able to explain these in feedback given to learners. Informed by their knowledge and understanding of assessment, they are able to 'design and manage both formative and summative assessments in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the requirements of accrediting bodies'. Finally, they are able and willing to 'keep detailed and diagnostic records of assessment', can 'interpret …assessment results' and use these to adjust and/or improve learning programmes.

Given the central role that assessment plays in the quality of teaching and learning, and given further the stress and reservations of many of our educators, it should be clear that there is need for leadership and management of assessment in the school context. It should also be clear that assessment is not only about the learning of individuals but about overall school progress.

You would have noticed from the quotation from Sutton above that assessment, if well planned and executed, could contribute to whole school development, something that is a priority in South Africa at present. In our discussion of assessment we shall, therefore, not focus on assessment in isolation. Rather, we shall endeavour to constantly link it to other quality assurance practices, including moderation, quality reviews and audits.

Siebörger (1998:75) suggests that the way assessment takes place in a school is an important indicator of the overall quality of that school, not only in terms of the academic achievements of the learners, but also in terms of the extent to which the school is achieving its aims and contributing to national aims and goals. Siebörger's comments link *assessment* with *management, administration and leadership*, another role required of all teachers and a role that is particularly pertinent to the **Advanced Certificate in School Management and Leadership**. In this regard the *Norms and Standards for Educators*, states that educators will be required to 'make decisions appropriate to the level (concerned), manage learning in the classroom, carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently and participate in school decision-making structures … in ways which are democratic, which support learners and colleagues, and which demonstrate responsiveness to changing circumstances and needs'.

This module is aimed at helping you perform these roles to the best of your ability. As such, it provides you with information on assessment and evaluation in general and on outcomes-based assessment in particular. It attempts to show you how assessment contributes to quality teaching and learning and how it promotes accountability. Most importantly, though, it places assessment in context, indicating how it could be used as a tool for transformation.

A well-conceived assessment plan does not only benefit teachers; it also contributes to more effective learning in the sense that learners know beforehand when and how assessments will be conducted and are therefore able to plan ahead, accepting some responsibility for their own learning as stipulated in the SAQA critical cross-field outcomes. In addition, it might help to change perceptions of assessment as an event to be dreaded to a perception of assessment as a learning experience, a process that is not aimed at 'catching out' learners but rather at supporting and monitoring their learning towards the achievement of pre-determined outcomes.

In this sense the focus of this module is not on assessment *per se* but on its management and/or administration. You will not, therefore, learn how to construct tests, assignments, examination papers, rubrics, reports, etc in depth. You will have learned about these things in your initial training as educators. In *this* module you will learn how to *plan for and conduct assessment* in such a way that it becomes an integral part of the teaching and learning programme rather than an additional administrative burden.

The design of this module is, therefore, informed by the assumption that you have already mastered the basics of assessment, that you know how to design assessment instruments and that your school has an assessment policy in place because the need for this has been addressed in the core modules *Lead and manage policy, planning, school development and governance* and *Managing teaching and learning*. In this sense this module builds on previous modules that dealt with teaching, learning, management and policy development. Its purpose is two-fold: to stimulate critical thinking on assessment, with particular reference to outcomes-based assessment, and to enable you to effectively and efficiently manage assessment in your school.

The Unit Standard on which this is based is intended for teachers/trainers, rather than managers (see **Text 1** in your **Reader**) so we have needed to interpret the unit standard from the perspective of leadership and management. We believe the role of school managers/leaders/ principals with regard to assessment is twofold:

- in respect of the teachers/departments within the school, the manager/leader must understand outcomes based assessment and all the related requirements for policy and practice sufficiently in order to support the teachers, monitor their performance, and arrange for their development;
- in respect of the learners and their parents, as well as the system as a whole, the principal is accountable for the validity, reliability, transparency, and fairness of the assessment of learners at the school.

The central questions for the module then become: what do principals/school leaders need to know to do this? What do they need to understand about outcomes based assessment (OBA) and the system of which it is a part? What do they need to know about preparing for, conducting, recording and reporting and providing feedback, as well as review of assessment?

In trying to answer these questions, the module has been structured into four units as follows:

1. **Unit 1: Introducing OBA**
   This unit explores the implications for assessment practice of South Africa's adoption of outcomes-based education. It raises the central debates of outcomes-based assessment (OBA) and briefly explores the leadership and management implications for assessment at national, provincial and school levels.

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2. **Unit 2: Planning OBA**

This unit begins by exploring the nature of assessment generally in order to identify principles that underpin effective assessment planning generally and then OBA in particular.

3. **Unit 3: Conducting OBA**
   This unit focuses on the leadership and management required to ensure that OBA is conducted effectively.

4. **Unit 4: Monitoring OBA**
   This unit focuses on the recording, reporting and reviewing needed to ensure that OBA practice is driven by a drive towards continuous improvement. This unit raises the issue of moderation to ensure quality – an issue that is explored in more detail in the companion elective module *Moderate assessment*.

Based on the assumption that those of you who registered for this module are already members of a school management team or are aspiring to be educational managers and/or leaders some day, the learning content has been carefully selected to reflect educational situations where a critical understanding of assessment and its management are crucial. Consequently, the activities and assignments in this module will require you to apply everything you learn to your own assessment and/or management practices, thereby not only improving assessment but also contributing to the transformation of your institution, community and the country as a whole.

Learning time

This module carries 15 credits. It should, therefore, take the average student approximately 150 hours to successfully complete the module. The 150 hours includes contact time, reading time, research time and time required to write assignments. Remember that about half of your time will be spent completing practice-based activities in your school. This will often involve you in discussions with your colleagues. A more specific indication of time to be spent on each of these activities will be provided in each of the units that make up this module.

Module outcomes

At the end of this module you should:

- Have a clear understanding of the nature, purposes and function of assessment in general
- Know and understand how outcomes-based education and quality assurance underpin the South African education and training system
- Recognize the differences and similarities between outcomes-based and other forms of assessment
- Be able to develop and implement a sound school assessment plan and/or system
- Be able to prepare all those involved in assessment for assessment events/processes
- Be able to conduct fair, valid and reliable assessments
- Be able to record and report assessment results in ways that are fair and culturally sensitive

- Be able and willing to evaluate your own assessment procedures and to adjust these where necessary.

Introducing OBA

Introducing OBA

1.1 Introduction

In order to be able to lead and manage assessment practice in your school, you first need to understand the issues involved. In this unit, which has been adapted slightly from Lubisi, Parker, Wedekind & Gultig (1998), we begin by comparing a common South African understanding of assessment with the assessment ideas introduced as part of the NCS outcomes-based education approach. After explaining the key differences between the old and new approaches, we explore the debate in outcomes-based assessment. This leads us into a consideration of the National Qualifications Framework and the implications for schools.

Unit 1 outcomes and assessment criteria

By the end of this unit, you should be better able to:

- Understand and participate in the debate about outcomes-based assessment
- Inspire colleagues with the overall vision of what can be achieved through a well-interpreted outcomes-based approach to curriculum and assessment.

1.2 Introducing the assessment debate

Exams, exams, exams!

Sounds like a bit of a crisis, doesn't it? Exams are regarded by many as the most important part of South African education. In fact, it has been suggested that some teachers are more interested in *testing* students than *teaching* them! Millions of rands are spent annually on organising school-leaving exam. And every year these are disrupted by people stealing and selling exam papers to learners desperate for a certificate that they believe is a passport to future job success. In some schools, increasingly more time is spent on 'control' tests and 'trial' exams. All the time spent on testing is taken away from time that teachers could use for teaching.

Why are we so obsessed with tests and exams? Why have we allowed assessment to determine our teaching and curriculum? Surely *what* and *how* we teach should guide the kind of assessment we use?

1.3   Why do we need to assess learners?

You might think this is a silly question. Assessment, in the form of tests and exams, is so much part of our experience of schools and learning that it seems absolutely natural. We seldom ask questions about whether it serves our purposes or whether there are alternative and better ways to judge whether learners have learnt what we wanted them to learn.

Have you ever wondered about why your teacher used a certain technique of assessment – like a test – rather than some other? Do you think your teacher made a conscious choice to use this assessment technique or had she simply done so because that 'had always been done' (in other words, because of 'tradition') or because 'it was the easiest thing to do'?

Effective teachers stress the importance of establishing the purposes of assessment before they even begin to talk about the content and methods of assessing. We have to ask ourselves why we want to assess before we decide what and how we want to assess. If we know exactly why we want to assess our learners, there is a better chance that we will use assessment methods that fit the purpose of assessment. And if we think about why we are assessing we will then get into the habit of using assessment practices to also assess our own teaching.

This section takes you on a journey with two teachers who think about their teaching and about whether the assessment practices they use are appropriate to their purposes. We will be 'flies on the wall' of the staffroom in which these teachers meet, drink tea, and talk about their teaching. Through listening to the ways in which they talk about their assessment problems, and the attempts they make to improve their practices, we will learn more about the different assessment possibilities we can use in our teaching.

Helen's disaster

Helen, a biology teacher at Siyafunda High School, has marked her Grade 10 August test. She is devastated. Twenty-five of her class of 40 learners have failed what she considered to be a simple test.

'These children must have very low IQs. That's the only way I can explain their pathetic performance,' she says to herself. Just then Nonhlanhla, the Accounting teacher, enters. 'Have you got a headache?' she asks. 'Do you want a Disprin?'

'Yes, I have a headache,' replies Helen, 'but a Disprin won't help! I just don't why I bothered to teach for the past eight months …' (She explains the reason for her 'headache' to Nonhlanhla.)

Nonhlanhla is sympathetic. 'I understand. I had something similar happen to me in the June accounting exam. Almost half my Grade 11 class failed.'

'Really? But I was told they did so well in the August test,' Helen replies.

'Yes, but that took work,' Nonhlanhla answers proudly. 'After the June vacation we revised the June exam paper for almost a week. I showed then how to respond to the types of questions set in the June paper. They took the revision very seriously because I showed them similar questions in five previous Grade 12 exam papers. And when I taught a section in class, I let the learners do a couple of related questions from the old Grade 12 accounting papers. In that way they got used to answering questions in an appropriate way,' says Nonhlanhla.

This reminds Helen of the study habits of two of her most successful learners.

'Ah! So this explains why Jenny and Bheki did so well in the biology test which had a high failure rate. They both used old Grade 10 biology exam papers to prepare for the test, and scored well above the class average. They both scored more than 75 per cent while the class average was only 31 per cent. There's real competition between those two, which is good. Many of the other learners could not label the animal cell, they could not label the human skeleton, and they could not fill in the missing words in the simple sentences on the digestive system. But Bheki and Jenny could,' said Helen.

stop & think !

Let's leave Helen and Nonhlanhla for a moment and try to make sense of what's happening. To do this, see whether you can jot down answers to the following questions in your journal:

What is the purpose of the tests and exams at Siyafunda? What are the teachers trying to 'measure'?
Why do you think teachers use this form of assessment? Is there an alternative?

our comments

The ways in which both Helen and Nonhlanhla assessed were very familiar to us. It reminded us of our own teaching days where our main **purpose** in assessing was to ensure that learners had learnt what we had taught them. If they hadn't learnt they would fail. It was as simple as that.
We think Helen and Nonhlanhla assessed in this way for the same reasons that we did and that was to:
- Motivate my learners to learn (which they didn't want to do!)
- Ensure that they were prepared for their school-leaving exam.

We have missed feelings about Nonhlanhla's strategy for improving her pass rate. On the one hand, we think it was good for her to get her learners to practise answering the kinds of questions they were likely to get in their exams. But on the other hand, we couldn't help wondering:

What is the point of making them good exam writers if they don't really understand their subject and aren't able to use their knowledge after they have left school?

Did you have this feeling? We know it's not a new feeing for us. We often wondered what the point of our teaching and assessing at school was. But we couldn't think of an alternative that would make us, our learners and our principal happy. We remember a biology teacher abandoning tests and getting her learners to write reports on field trips, dissect frogs and mount the cross-sections of flowers on wall charts. She suggested that this made 'biology useful and meaningful' to her learners. But the principal didn't think so. He said her assessments were not 'reliable' and 'objective'. He said they could cause problems because they were based on her 'impressions'.
But enough of that for now. As we delve deeper into these issues, some that seem a bit unclear at the moment will become a great deal clearer. Let's go back to Siyafunda to see how the discussion between Helen and Nonhlanhla is proceeding.

More headaches for Siyafunda teachers

The conversation now takes a twist that almost re-ignites Helen's headache (which has been slowly disappearing). Nonhlanhla begins telling Helen how she has begun assessing her learners every day as they go about their classroom activities.

'But if my learners fail tests which only come once a week (or monthly) and for which they have time to prepare, imagine how badly they would do if they were assessed continuously!' said Helen. 'And I can't even imagine the amount of time I will have to spend preparing, writing and marking tests!' not to mention the time that it will take to enter to marks into our mark schedules and rank our learners. No! No! No!'

'Calm down, Helen! I think you have misunderstood me,' says Nonhlanhla. 'I don't set more tests. I still have only my monthly test, but between these I observe my learners as they work on problems in class. I also listen to them as we discuss issues and I set small activities – which I get learners to assess – before we discuss them in class.

'I mostly record these assessments as comments like "Thabo is struggling with such and such," so that I can work on this difficulty. This allows me to constantly adapt my teaching so that I deal with learners' problems before they are formally assessed.

'I have also moved away from using only tests to record marks for my learner. I now include many of these small in-class activities in my assessment, but I am also setting open-book assignments and problem-solving activities – like asking my students to do the tuckshop's balance sheet – instead of the monthly class test. Doesn't that make sense?

Helen doesn't think so.

'How reliable are these forms of assessment?' she asks. 'I can understand setting class activities and monitoring how learners are doing. But I'm not sure about using these – and practical activities like doing the tuckshop's balance sheet – for individual marks. Tests and exams are tried and tested. These forms of assessment aren't consistent and reliable!'

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stop & think

Before you read further you might want to sit back and think carefully about this dialogue and compare the ideas with those mentioned earlier.
What do you think about Nonhlanhla's new ideas? How are they different from the strategies she mentioned previously? Why do you think she has moved to this new assessment strategy? In other words, what is the purpose of her assessment?

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our comments

We find Nonhlanhla's ideas interesting and were reminded of the biology teacher we mentioned earlier. You may remember she also got her learners to do classroom activities and then used these to assess their progress. Both she and Nonhlanhla seem interested in ensuring that what learners learn – and are assessed on – is **useful**, like Nonhlanhla's asking her learners to use their accounting skills to balance the tuckshop's books.
But Nonhlanhla seems to have another purpose for her assessment: she seems to

use it as a **form of teaching** and **integrates** it into her teaching time. Instead of only dealing with problems once learners have failed she continually monitors their progress and adapts her teaching to deal with these problems before a final test or exam.

A final point she makes is that we should use **more variety** in our assessment methods. We like that idea, but are not sure why it is necessary. We wonder whether it might not just complicate our work as teachers. We also have some of Helen's doubts. Learners and parents trust tests and exams. They regard them as 'objective'. These other assessment methods rely a lot on the teacher's judgements, which might cause problems.

So what do you think? Any ideas?
Let us go back to Siyafunda. Mandla Moya the school principal, who is in many ways Nonhlanhla's mentor and inspiration – has come into the staffroom. Let's listen to his contribution to the continuing discussion …

Mandla argues that we need a greater variety of assessment methods

'Tests are good at assessing learners' abilities to recall information, and perhaps to understand and analyse this information,' says Mandla. 'But,' he continues, 'it is much more difficult to assess practical skills, attitudes and values in written classroom tests.'
'Think of it … if you were to select the school soccer team, would you ask the players to write a test on the rules of soccer and select the top 11 learners for your team? Of course not! You would select them on the basis of your assessment of their skills in, and approach to, playing soccer. Now I know soccer isn't exactly the same as history, for example, but there are similarities …

'The point is, Helen, we need a variety of ways to assess the different skills, knowledge and values we want learners to learn. Instead of just relying on written tests we should choose a **mode of assessment** that is appropriate to the purposes of our assessment.'
Mandla then raises a new point about assessment. 'I want my assessment system to do more than just give learners a mark and rank them. That seems limited. I'd like to assess so that learners get feedback about exactly where they are strong or weak,' says Mandla. 'It should help improve their performance and give us feedback as to whether our teaching is working or not.'

activity 1a

time allocation ± 15 min

This activity forms the base for the discussion that follows. Make notes in your journal on the following questions:
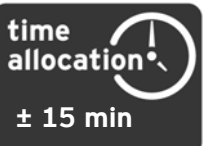
What are the main differences between present assessment practices at Siyafunda and the assessment practices described by Mandla?
What useful techniques – other than tests – do you think Mandla is going to suggest that Helen use as part of continuous assessment?

1.4 Two contrasting approaches to assessment

Mandla and Nonhlanhla's assessment 'model'

Madla's key point is that different kinds of outcomes we want to assess – understanding knowledge, or practising skills or developing attitudes and values – require that we use different *modes* and *techniques* of assessment. Mandla uses this to justify his argument for use of a *greater variety* of assessment techniques. This seems to suggest that teachers need to know the reason why they are assessing. We must decide *what* knowledge, skills and values we want to assess *before* we decide *how* we will assess. Mandla seems to be implying that our assessment at the moment is *ritualistic*: we do it without thinking about *why* we are doing it. He suggests that this be replaced by assessment that is based on knowing what we want learners to learn.

These 'principles' already suggest certain kinds of techniques that Helen could use. For instance, if she wants to assess a learner's ability to *communicate* in English she should design an assessment in which the learner must demonstrate an ability to have a conversation with someone, or to write a letter, rather than give the person a grammar test. However if her purpose is to assess the learners' knowledge of grammar rules, then a written test is probably appropriate. (Nonhlanhla and the biology teacher mentioned earlier has some other ideas which Mandla would probably approve of. Maybe you should look back at Nonhlanhla's description of her practice.)

Mandla's ideas have implications for how assessment is used.

Firstly, learners will be evaluated in terms of their ability to achieve the clearly defined purposes, or *outcomes*, of the course they are being taught. These outcomes must include the development of *knowledge*, *skills*, *attitudes* and *values*. The key question teachers and learners will ask is: 'Can learners demonstrate that they have achieved the desired outcomes of this course?'

An important implication of this for teachers is that they must let learners know what assessment criteria or standards they need to meet in order to be regarded as competent in their course of study. Learners need to be informed of these *before* they begin studying and teachers should encourage learners to sue these to monitor their own learning.

Secondly, a learner's performance will be evaluated against a set of *criteria* rather than against a class average (the norm-referenced testing Helen was using) or the performance of other learners. These *criteria* can be different things, but they should be 'measurable'.

- It could be a skill of kicking a soccer ball. This could be expressed as 'the learners must demonstrate that they can consistently and accurately kick a soccer ball with one of their feet'.
- It could be the ability to analyse a poem. This could be expressed as 'the learners should be able to write a one-page analysis of a poem in which they demonstrate an understanding of metaphor, simile and alliteration'.

Because this view of assessment uses a set of criteria (as opposed to a norm, or other learners) as the basis of assessment, it is broadly known as **criterion-referenced assessment**. These criteria are also called **outcomes**, **competences** or **competencies**. In South Africa this type of assessment has become known as **outcomes-based assessment**.

Thirdly, Mandla also wants an assessment that will help learners improve their performance as well as help him reflect on and improve the quality of teaching. An assessment which is used to 'teach' as well as assess is called formative assessment because it *forms* or *shapes* learning. This differs from using assessment purely to describe how much a learner has learnt at the end of course or section of a course.

This, of course, does not mean that one shelves the idea of using assessment as a means of deciding whether a learner has learnt enough to proceed to the next year. It is simply a shift in *emphasis*.

Helen's assessment model

Mandla and Nonhlanhla's assessment 'model' seems to us to have at least three important characteristics. It:

- is outcomes-based
- is criterion-referenced
- focuses on formative assessment.

How does this compare with Helen and Nonhlanhla's early approach to assessment?

Firstly, it seems to us that both Helen and Nonhlanhla used *tests* and *examinations* as the main techniques for assessing their learners. Helen's biology test seemed to be designed to measure how much of the *content* which she had given them they could *recall*. In other words, this form of assessment assumes the main function of assessment to be to check whether learners can recall the *input* made by teachers and textbooks rather than to assess whether they achieved clearly defined outcomes.

Secondly, a very important function of Helen's assessment seems to be to *rank* and *compare* the achievements of different learners. She *compared* Jenny and Bheki's performances with *each other*, and also *compared* Jenny and Bheki *with the rest of the class*. In Helen's case, the *norm* established by the class who wrote her August biology test is the class *average* of 31 per cent.

Mandla was keen on an assessment which placed less emphasis on this, and, instead, compared a learner's performance against a set of criteria. He was more interested in whether a learner could particular things than where the learner ranked in a class.

Thirdly, Helen used her tests almost exclusively to create 'summary pictures' of learners' achievements. The many biology test marks in Helen's class were probably *added together* to produce a larger 'picture' of the *standard* of learners' performances in biology.

They were used to sum up a learner's performance. This summary usually occurs at the end of the educational process and is used to decide whether the learner has a sufficient grasp of the work to allow her to pass on to the next section or the next grade. This 'description', 'picture' or 'summary' can be made in:

- words – a report card could suggest the learner's work is 'excellent' or 'weak'

- numbers – a report could suggest the learner knows 90/200 or 45 per cent of her work
- symbols – the report could indicate the quality of the learner's work as 'A' or 'F'.

We have also described Helen's model in terms of three key characteristics wherein we suggest that her assessment is:

- input-based
- norm-referenced
- mainly used summatively.

Does your answer look something like this? Why not check and note any major differences you may have with us. Don't make changes yet though. Read a little further before you re-assess.

1.4.1 Complicating the assessment debate

Now we want to throw in a complication. And we will do this often because the real world is *never* as simple as suggested by the clear distinctions we have drawn between Mandla's *outcomes-based assessment* model and Helen's *input-based assessment* model.

In *practice*, each of these models uses aspects of the other model. For instance:

- *Outcomes-based assessment* must also *sum up* what a learner has learnt (i.e. it has a summative function too). But it will *sum up* a learner's competence by recording which of the criteria (and outcomes) the learner has achieved rather than by allocating a mark to that learner.
- *Input-based assessment* would also use assessment **formatively** (i.e. to improve teaching and learning), but it is not likely to emphasise it as much as an outcomes-based assessment – with its focus on continuous assessment – would.

Models are designed to explain concepts and often do so through exaggerating differences. In reality the differences between assessment practices are often more blurred: they are a *matter of emphasis* rather than being *opposites*.

This provides a warning against regarding the 'old' input-based assessment as *entirely separate* and *different* from the 'new' outcomes-based assessment. As you read descriptions of these different models, you just understand that we are sketching exaggerated versions of each in order to highlight differences. We are not describing actual practices of assessment which often draw from different approaches depending on the *purposes* of the assessment.

Outcomes-based assessment does not mean that teachers have to abandon many of the effective methods of assessing they have used in the past. It seems to us that what teachers need to be encouraged and supported to do is use a variety of assessment methods, including those which they used in the past. The methods would, however, need to reliably and appropriately assess the stated outcomes of learning.

1.4.2 Developing techniques to summarise the assessment debate

Figure 1 below represents an attempt to summarise what we have discussed in the form of a diagram. Putting something into a diagram format is very useful way to try and understand and remember it. We have decided to make the

dividing line between the two models a broken line in order to show that these two models of assessment are not mutually exclusive. Rather than there being a 'hard' divide between the two approaches, we are talking more about a difference of emphasis. We can say that the two models tend to two ends of a spectrum. Between the two extremes are many different forms of assessment which are different because of the degree of emphasis they out on the key characteristics. We have tried to represent this idea in Figure 1.

Input-based, summative, norm-referenced assessment

Outcomes-based, formative, criterion-referenced assessment

Figure 1: A continuum of assessment practice

The aim of the outcomes-based education movement seems to be to shift the emphasis from the left to the right of the continuum. It is likely that an effective outcomes-based assessment practice will fall between the two extremes, but towards the right-hand side of the continuum.

As you learn about new models maybe you could try and place them on this continuum. You will need to examine and compare the characteristics of the different approaches carefully in order to do so, but it might be an interesting exercise.

key points

Here is *our* schematic representation of the debate about assessment in which we emphasise the differences. Notice how we have left a space in which we can add information. It is very useful to consider a table like this as a 'working' document which you are continually adapting as your ideas grow and change.

What have we learnt so far?	
Helen Hall's 'old' view	Mandla Moya's 'new' ideas
The focus is on measuring recall of **inputs**. Input is usually regarded as subject content from teachers and textbooks. Assessment tends to be concerned with learning content for its own sake.	The focus is on assessing against clearly defined **outcomes.** An outcome usually refers to what a learner must know and be able to do, and to the values and attitudes she should have developed after going through a learning experience. Assessment is concerned with achieving useful and lasting knowledge, skills and values.
Assessment is usually **norm-referenced** i.e. a learner's individual performance is compared with a norm (class average or the average performance of a similar group of learners).	Assessment is usually **criterion-referenced** i.e a learner's performance is evaluated against an explicitly stated set of criteria.
Assessment is usually used **summatively** – the main aim of assessment is to arrive at summary descriptions of learners' achievements at the end of a section of work, course or year.	Assessment is mainly **formative** – the key function of assessment is seen to be that of supporting student learning and developing teaching quality. Summative assessment is also used, but is usually of a different kind to that used in 'old' assessment practices.

But ... I must remember not to make hard distinctions between the different views. This table exaggerates differences.	Add any more details you may have ...

1.5 Are tests and exams useful models of assessment?

1.5.1 Introducing the debate about tests and exams

You will have noticed that Helen's assessment framework is similar to that of many South African schools. Most South African schools have relied on an understanding of assessment characterised by written tests and high-stakes examinations.

This isn't surprising. The 'old' South African education departments assumed that good learning and teaching was about *listening*, *remembering* and *obeying* the words and ideas of older people, and particularly of people in authority. The 'philosophy' which underpinned the actions of these departments believed that schools had to develop citizens who were respectful of God and of authority. By implication this led to wanting citizens who obeyed the governing authority of the day. This encouraged a view of assessment which focused on the ability of learners to recall the inputs made by authorities (like teachers and textbooks). Exams and tests became a mechanism for disciplining learners.

The 'new' Department of Education has a different understanding of teaching and learning and the types of citizens education should aim to develop. Consequently, it promotes a different education system and a different form of assessment. There is a belief in the unique and different potentials of learners. There is also a belief that these learners must be given the ability to make their own way in society as empowered and independent beings. This encourages a view of assessment which focuses on the ability of learners to think critically and to use this ability to sensitively in working and living in a society. Assessment has become a means through which learners are able to monitor their own development.

Given these very different views of education and assessment, it should not surprise you that there has been a fierce argument as to whether we should have tests and exams in schools at all. This is the next issue we will tackle. We want you to work through this issue with the ideas about assessment we have already discussed firmly in mind. Ask yourself whether the ideas we will encounter:

- offer the Siyafunda teachers any new ideas
- offer us any detail which can enrich our understanding of the assessment debate.

1.5.2 An argument against tests and exams

Mandla has decided that Helen might be persuaded to 'move with the times' if she read something by George Madaus, an American educationist. Mandla himself had been very impressed by Madaus's arguments against tests and exams.

activity 1b

time allocation
± 60 min

Read the summary of the argument made by Madaus below and write responses to the following questions in your journal:
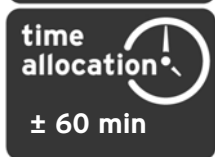
Why does Madaus suggest tests are problematic?
How does an over-emphasis on testing change the curriculum according to Madaus?

Madaus (1988 in Lubisi et al. 1998:39-42) argues:

- Concern with test "scores" can mask more important concerns about the quality of teaching and learning.
- High stakes testing can distort the curriculum (as illustrated below).
- Teachers teach to the test: if something is not tested it is not taught and teaching may become about exam technique rather than meaningful learning that is retained after the test has been written. (How much do you recall of learning associated with exams that you passed well?)
- Past papers become the curriculum. It is reactive and limited whereas the curriculum should be proactive and responsive to change.
- The form of past paper questions is taught at the expense of developing other more transferable learning skills.
- Society comes to see the test result as the only indicator of success. The fact that a school may have poor exam results because it has few resources or too few teachers or socio-economic problems is masked by the results.
- Externally set examinations disempower teachers and schools in being responsive to school community needs: the curriculum is set outside the school.

Next we move to two more complex questions in which we expect you to *apply* Madaus's ideas to your experience of assessment.

1. Have you experienced some of the issues raised by Madaus in schools with which you are familiar?
2. Is there evidence from Siyafunda School that would support Madaus's concerns about tests and exams?

Madaus does not impress Helen

The Siyafunda teachers get together to discuss the issues raised by Madaus. Helen is not that impressed. She says she thinks some of the issues raised by Madaus could be valid but she still insists that tests and examinations remain the only reliable way of assessing learners.
Helen raises an interesting point. She says that critics often blame testing, as a technique, for problems which are largely due to human error. Tests, she says, can't be blamed for the fact that people use them badly.
Otherwise, says Helen, 'we will have to start blaming injection needles for the mistakes that doctors make.'

You might be thinking: 'Ah, but Madaus is referring to standardised tests in the United States and that doesn't hold for South Africa!'
This is *partly* true. But we should remember that the matriculation examination which has been used in South Africa for many years is modelled along the lines of a *standardised* test. (It is not yet clear to what extent the exit level examination

for the FETC will also take the form of a standardised test.) The influence of a high stakes exit level standardised test permeates down into the whole system. The kinds of tests used in schools, particularly secondary schools, modelled themselves after the matric exam. So, in effect, teachers traditionally begin drilling their learners on tasks similar to those in the matric exam as early as Grade 8. You may still remember how Nonhlanhla drilled her Grade 11 learners using old matric accounting papers. This explains why so many secondary school teachers felt so uncomfortable recently: they were sure what the new NSC examinations would look like.

But before we tell you what we think of Madaus's views' let's listen to the other side of the debate. Just as there is criticism of tests and examinations, there are also strong arguments in favour of this method of assessment.

1.5.3   In defence of tests and exams

Helen finds a book – called *Essentials of Educational Measurement* – in order to continue her battle with Mandla. She doesn't like being a loser, but realises that so far she doesn't have much to back up her argument, while Mandla now has Madaus on his side. The book she finds is written by another American educationist, Robert Ebel.

Helen likes it because it contains such a strong defence of tests and exams. She decides to share the book with Mandla and Nonhlanhla, but decides to prepare herself before doing this. She makes the following summary of Ebel's argument in order to bolster her own case.

Ebel (1979 in Lubisi et al. 1998:43-48) provides the following arguments in favour of retaining examinations:

- Tests and examinations have always been a key part of effective teaching and learning.
- External examinations, set by people who are subject experts, provide for standardisation of curriculum offerings.
- Providing a variety of assessment tasks in an externally set examination can help ensure that the skills needed to perform these tasks are taught in the classroom.
- Consistently low test scores tell us that something is wrong – either in the teaching or in the learning.
- Tests are efficient and dependable and can be beneficial if used wisely.
- Tests can help teachers give more valid, reliable grades.
- Test results and the discussion thereafter can be rewarding and motivating learning experiences.
- There are no reliable alternatives available to testing.

What are Ebel's assumptions?

If you read Ebel's book (the reference is provided in the bibliography), you will notice that Ebel *does* put up a strong case in defence of testing, as we expected. What is important for us to find out is how he defends testing.

He seems to assume to rest his defence on an *assumption* that tests are *objective*, *value-free* and *accurate* measures of learners' achievements. It is on the basis of this assumption that Ebel goes on to suggest that tests and examinations cannot be replaced. Ebel also seems to suggest that assessment and testing *are the same thing*.

These assumptions raise a host of questions which we need to explore and make decisions about. For instance:

- Is assessment the same as testing? Or is there a difference between assessment and testing?
- If there is a difference, what is it?
- Is Ebel correct in assuming that tests are objective, value-free and accurate?
- If they are not objective, value-free and accurate, what assumptions does Ebel base his argument on?

You may be irritated and ask 'Why are they asking questions? As my teachers they should be answering the questions!' We will be suggesting some answers later but we also want to emphasise how important it is to practise *asking the right questions*. This is a very important part of learning and a skill that educators, in particular, need to have.

What do we mean by assumptions?

Earlier you may have noticed an increasing use of the terms assume and assumptions. These are important terms and are used a great deal in educational debate.
All writers build their arguments about a particular issue on what they believe about the way in which other, bigger, things in the world work. For example, a writer may build an argument about assessment on her belief about what it means to 'educate'. Such a prior belief can be called an 'assumption'. So, for instance, Ebel can defend tests *because he assumes* they are fairly accurate indicators of performance. Madaus doesn't share Ebel's assumption – in other words, he doesn't think tests accurately indicate the standard of a person's performance – so he *cannot* build an argument which is supportive of testing. Keep this in mind as you encounter the argument of other writers and thinkers.

1.5.4   Summarising the debate about tests and exams

We think Ebel and Madaus differ in one major way: the two disagree over the extent to which tests distort curricula, teaching and learning.

How does Madaus support his argument?
Firstly, Madaus argues that people have so much faith in tests that they believe that marks indicate educational quality. For instance, people believe that a school that produces good Grade 12 results must be a school in which educational quality exists. Sometimes, he argues, *this simply isn't true*. Some 'cram' schools, for instance, will get learners to 'spot' and rote learn for exams – and so they get a reputation for high marks – but offer little by way of a broad, quality education. Secondly, Madaus argues that because exams have such *high stakes*, teachers tend to *change the syllabus*. Teachers will skip those sections of work which are not for 'exam purposes', even though these sections might be very important educationally. In other words, tests and exams begin to drive our education system.
Thirdly, Madaus argues that the high stakes placed on exams also distorts the way in which learners are taught. In other words, not only do teachers re-interpret the *content* (see the point above), but they also narrow their *methods* of teaching and assessing. Teachers prepare learners for exams by setting the types of questions they are likely to get in their Grade 12 exams rather than using an array

of educationally-sound forms of assessment. (Do you remember Nonhlanhla's earlier teaching strategies?)

How does Ebel support his argument?

Firstly, Ebel argues that writers like Madaus are *wrong* in assuming that the quality of what learners learn is *unrelated* to the marks they achieve. Instead Ebel argues that tests scores (marks) are good indicators of educational quality. Secondly, Ebel asserts that the areas tested in high-stakes exams are *identified by experts* as being important for learners to learn. So it is in learners' interests that teachers teach the things that will be covered in these tests/exams. So again, he suggests it is wrong to assume that teaching towards an exam is necessarily a bad thing educationally.

Finally, Ebel sees no problem with teachers preparing learners to answer questions similar to those covered by tests and exams. He argues that it would be unfair to expect learners to be assessed on outcomes which they had never been taught to perform. Again, he suggests that writers like Madaus exaggerate the 'damage' this does to educational quality.

That is our analysis. You might want to read Madaus and Ebel carefully and critically to assess whether our analysis is accurate and complete. You might want to develop a table in which you sketch the differences between Madaus and Ebel.

key points

Helen and Mandla differ on the advantages of the introduction of an outcomes-based education in South African schools. Mandla's main objection to the old system is that tests and examinations were the dominant techniques of assessing in this input-based education. Madaus argues (like Mandla) that tests distort curricula (and thus education). Ebel (like Helen) defends testing, arguing that tests – while not prefect and sometimes badly implemented – enrich rather than impoverish curricula (and thus education).

You may be thinking: 'Ah, so Ebel supports input-based assessment while Madaus supports outcomes-based assessment.' And then you may have been tempted to categorise them in the chart you should be developing of the differences between Helen's and Mandla's ideas about assessment, or in a chart which indicates the differences between an input-based and an outcomes-based understanding of assessment.

On the other hand, you may have realised that such a classification of Ebel and Madaus would probably not be quite right. The fact that Ebel defends testing does not mean that he necessarily supports an input-based assessment.

What is important is that you realise that there are not only two *completely distinct and different* views on assessment. Different views of assessment intersect with one another, as we explained earlier.

1.6 Implications of OBA for leadership and management

Having thought a little about the nature of OBE and its implications for assessment in particular, we now need to turn our attention to leadership and management implications. Did you notice how Mandla entered into a developmental debate with his staff members – he didn't just tell them what should be done but rather encouraged them to think through the arguments in favour of the new approaches. The adoption of a *transformational* form of OBE favours this more *participatory* and *democratic* approach to leadership and management and the need for those in authority positions to be able to *justify* their actions and polices. And this happens at all levels of the education system.

As we know, South Africa has adopted an outcomes-based approach to education and training. This means that every structure, every policy, every programme, every activity and every qualification must be outcomes-based, that is, each of these must use outcomes both as its point of departure and as its point of reference. In management terms, this would mean that managers and/or leaders must, by definition, use the outcome/s as basis or point of departure for planning and organising and as point of reference for controlling and evaluating.

Does that make sense to you? Assuming that it does, let's see whether or not it works this way.

According to our explanation the first step in the creation of an outcomes-based system has to be the identification of one or more outcomes. The overall outcome, or long-term goal of the South African education and training system is the vision of a:

> 'prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice.'

The **second step** is the development of **policies** that spell out this vision, provide the rationale/reasons and principles informing it and describe the structures, processes and procedures required to realize it. We all know how many policies have seen the light since 1994!

The **third step**, from a systemic point of view, is the creation of the structures and procedures described in the policy documents because without them the vision will be only that, a vision, something that will never become a reality.

Requisite structures will differ depending on the nature of the system. In an outcomes-based *education* system the structure that is most critical is a qualifications framework because it serves as a *systemic framework* for the organisation of education and training, ensuring that the qualifications awarded to learners are of a sufficient quality for employers and/or other stakeholders to acknowledge them as valid and/or credible.

The South African qualifications framework is known as the NQF – i.e. the *National Qualifications Framework* and, in the sense that its prime responsibility

is to contribute to the creation of an integrated education and training system it is an important systemic transformation mechanism. Its transformation mission is encapsulated in its objectives, as outlined in the SAQA Act No.58 of 1995, namely to:

- Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements
- Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths
- Enhance the quality of education and training
- Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities
- Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

Figure 2 below provides our overview of the framework. You will note that there are three bands: General Education and Training which covers schooling from Grade R to Grade 9 and ABET level 1 – this is the compulsory education that must be made freely available to all in terms of the Constitutional right to education; next comes Further Education and Training – not all citizens complete further education and training but you will note that provision is made for three different ways of doing so, though adult colleges, through general school and/or through the more vocational courses offered by Further Education and Training Institutions. The highest band is Higher Education and Training which offers post-school learning, which may be academically or professionally focused. The ACE you are currently busy with is considered a professional undergraduate qualification in this framework.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING		
Doctoral degrees		
Masters degrees		
Post-graduate degrees/diplomas/certificates		
Under-graduate degrees/diplomas/certificates		
FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING		
ABET	**General**	**Vocational**
L4	NSC/G12	NSC/G12
L3	G11	G11
L2	G10	G10
GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING		
Senior Phase: G7-G9/ABET L1		
Intermediate Phase: G4-G6		
Foundation Phase: GR-G3		

Figure 2: A simplified overview of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The development and maintenance of the South African National Qualifications Framework (SANQF) is the responsibility of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). This body, SAQA, must ensure that every single qualification in the country is not only outcomes-based but also contributes to the realization of the vision described earlier.

To this purpose, SAQA identified two sets of outcomes – seven *'critical cross-field outcomes'* and five *'developmental outcomes'* that must inform all education and training programmes, irrespective of the subject, learning area or discipline offered concerned and irrespective of the level at which learning takes place.

You are probably familiar with these from Departmental training initiatives and we also talked about them in the core module *Understanding school leadership and management in the South African context*. Nonetheless, they are so important that we are going to repeat them again here.

As you remind yourself of the critical and developmental outcomes that underpin the South African education and training system, think about what kinds of assessment activities will be required in order to provide evidence of progress made towards achieving these outcomes.

The critical outcomes are stated below. Learners will be able to:
- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information
- Communicate effectively using visual symbolic and/or language skills in various modes
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem–solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes are as shown below. Learners will be able to:
- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts
- Explore education and career opportunities
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

These critical cross field and developmental outcomes inform all qualifications registered on the NQF, including the National Senior Certificate. If you visit the SAQA website for information (www.saqa.org.za) you will note that the NQF recognises both qualifications and unit standards.

- A **qualification** is "the formal recognition of the achievement of the required number and range of credits and other requirements at specific levels of the NQF determined by the relevant bodies registered by SAQA." The ACE is a registered qualification. There are different pathways or programmes towards

achieving the qualification – for example you may study the modules in the ACE: School Leadership in a different sequence depending on your HEI; you will complete different assessment tasks and you will select different electives but at the end you must be able to provide evidence that you have met the exit level outcomes for the qualification as a whole.

- A **unit standard** is a "registered statement of desired education and training outcomes and its associated assessment criteria together with administrative and other information as specified in the regulations." A qualification may be made up from unit standards, as is the case with this ACE in School Management and Leadership. This particular elective module forms part of the ACE programme leading towards the ACE qualification and is based on the Unit Standard for Plan and conduct assessment. The Unit Standard itself will be taught differently in this programme which focuses on school leaders and managers than it would, for example, if it were part of a programme for school teachers or for ABET practitioners. However, the ways in which students are assessed against the exit level outcomes follows the process that we will map out in Units 2 to 4.

It should be clear from this analysis that the move to OBE has foregrounded the role of assessment and that assessment now needs to be managed much more carefully than in the past. In fact, we and our learners need to know what and how we will assess right from the beginning as assessment, teaching and learning are seen to be inextricably interconnected.

The shortcomings of past policy, and the requirements of the new curriculum for Grades R-9 and Adult Basic Education and Training, necessitated the development of a new assessment policy that would be compatible with the newly introduced outcomes-based education. The new policy, *Assessment Policy for GET and ABET*, developed in terms of Section 3(4)(1) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (No. 27 of 1996), applies to learning in the General Education and Training Band of the National Qualifications Framework. The development of this policy was a step in the right direction. However, indications are that learners still fail, standards in schools are still variable and there is still evidence of incidents where proper assessment protocols are not followed.

To address these problems, the DoE released a complementary policy document, *The National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R – 12)* (DoE 2005), which stipulates the minimum number of assessments to be conducted each year in the various school phases and the records that must be kept in this regard. The release of this document was an attempt to standardise assessment across schools. In 2006 this document was supplemented by two addenda relating to alignment with the NSC and special needs. The point remains, though: policies cannot in themselves correct education problems; it is what we do in our schools that counts.

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE 2001) responded to this challenge in Circular 41 of 2001 in which they set out provincial policy and procedure for *Establishment, Supporting and Monitoring Provincial Assessment Quality Assurance Structures*. This circular made provision for the establishment of assessment teams at Provincial, District and Cluster levels and set out some guidelines for a School Assessment Team which we set out in full below.

Are you familiar with the assessment support structures in your cluster, district and province? Maybe you should try to find out what support is available.

As you read through the extract from the GDE document (GDE 2001:6-8) below, think about the extent to which your school seems to be ready to lead and manage assessment effectively in terms of the criteria outlined.

School Assessment Team (SAT)

School Management must address assessment in their whole school planning. The function of the School Assessment Team will be to develop and maintain a school assessment policy that will be an integral part of whole school policy planning. The school assessment policy must be in line with the Provincial and National Assessment Policy. The School Assessment Team must also implement and monitor the implementation of the School, Provincial and National Assessment Policy as well as evaluate the policy on an ongoing basis and, where necessary, make amendments.

If the school has a structure in place that is performing these functions, or can take on these functions, it is not necessary to form a new structure (e.g. School Management Team).

Recommended composition

The School Assessment Team must include the principal and/or deputy principal. All Heads of Department and at least one elected staff member from each of the phases offered in the school (e.g. Foundation Phase (grades 1-3), Intermediate Phase (grades 4-6), Senior Phase (grades 7-9) and Further Education Phase (grades 10-12). It is also strongly recommended that a parent representative from the School Governing Body (SGB) be granted observer status on the School Assessment Team. Parent representation on the School Assessment Team will ensure that the parent body is constantly informed regarding the provincial and school assessment policies and assessment guidelines.

Meetings
The School Assessment Team should meet at least once a month.

Guidelines on strategic assessment management functions for the School Assessment Team

Planning of assessment, implementation and support [units 2 and 3 of this module]

- Facilitate the development and implementation of the School Assessment Policy
- Draw up and implement a School Assessment Management and Action Plan
- Plan and prepare continuous assessment of learners' performance and achievement
- Set high standards of expectations for learners and educators
- Promote and ensure the use of assessment practices to accommodate barriers experienced by learners
- Continuously identify and address barriers to learning and development in a whole school approach through continuous assessment and other assessment systems

- Ensure that the School Assessment Team facilities educationally sound, fair, reliable and valid assessment practices at the school
- Ensure the implementation of the District Assessment strategies
- Train educators on National and Provincial Assessment Policy
- Provide ongoing support to educators implementing Report 550
- Assist educators in the implementation of continuous assessment
- Design prevention and intervention programmes to support learner achievement
- Ensure that learner diversity is accommodated through the use of a variety of assessment methods, tools and techniques
- Train, ensure the implementations of and support educators in the planning and implementation of a variety of teaching and learning activities
- Ensure the implementation of an effective recording and reporting system
- Ensure the completion of and validate the Promotion/Progression and Retention Schedules
- Ensure participation of parents in assessment and parental access to the records of their children.

Monitoring and moderation of school-based assessment and reporting [unit 4 of this module and the companion elective module Moderate assessment]

- A member of the School Assessment Team must attend and participate in Cluster Assessment Team (CAT) meetings
- Moderate continuous assessment of learners' performance and achievement
- Verify and certify the information on the official Learner Profiles, Promotion/Progression and Possible Retention/Failure Schedules
- Monitor the implementation of a variety of teaching and learning activities
- Analyse, reflect, rate and review learner assessment and repetition rates
- Analyse, reflect and review teaching and learning activities
- Continuously identify and address barriers to learning and development in a whole school approach through continuous assessment and other assessment systems
- Ensure the effective use of portfolios and learner profiles
- Prepare progress reports once a term, including written evidence of challenges on the implementation of the management plan
- Submit written reports to the principal and School Assessment Team on all assessment issues and decisions taken at cluster meetings
- Prepare and submit overall progress reports on learner assessments
- Address parent and/or learner appeals against assessment decisions.

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activity 1c

time allocation

± 60 min to several days
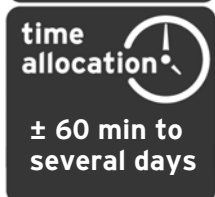
Check whether there are cluster, district and provincial assessment teams in place and whether your school engages with these in appropriate ways. If your school participates in these structures, are there regular recorded report-backs to your school? Initiate such procedures if they are lacking.

Does your school have a School Assessment Team or an equivalent body that meets regularly to address the issues outlined above? If no, establish this structure in your school. If yes, check that minutes of meetings are kept and that agreed actions are followed up on.

Do you have copies of the national and provincial assessment policies on file? Check and refer to the Departmental websites at national and provincial level for updates:

The key websites are listed below:

National: www.education.gov.za and www.thutong.org.za

Eastern Cape: www.ecprov.gov.za/education

Free State: www.fs.gov.za

Gauteng: www.education.gpg.gov.za

KwaZulu-Natal: www.kzneducation.gov.za

Limpopo: www.limpopo.gov.za

Mpumalanga: www.mpumalanga.gov.za

North West: www.nwpg.gov.za/education

Northern Cape: www.ncedu.ncape.gov.za

Western Cape: www.wced.gov.za.

Does your school have a School Assessment Policy in place? If no, initiate the process for developing such a policy. If yes, check that there is evidence that the policy is actually guiding practice.

1.7 Conclusion

In this unit we looked at the implications of outcomes-based education for changed assessment practices. We also looked briefly at the implications that the adoption of outcomes-based education has for the awarding of qualifications and the development, delivery and management of education with respect to assessment.

Unit 2 focuses on planning assessment in general and OBA in particular and Unit 3 focuses on conducting outcomes-based assessment. Together these two units introduce you to the complexities of managing assessment in an outcomes-based system. They also show you how changed attitudes towards and approaches in assessment could enhance teaching and learning and better prepare school leavers for the outside world.

key points

- A system is outcomes-based when all its decisions and activities have pre-specified outcomes as its point of departure and its point of reference.
- Assessment is a critical element of quality education and training.
- Outcomes-based assessment favours formative, continuous assessment and favours the use of a wider range of assessment strategies than only tests and exams.
- In an outcomes-based education system assessment focuses on competence – i.e. the ability to apply knowledge and understanding to real-life situations – rather than knowledge in isolation.
- The structure that is most crucial to the creation and maintenance of an outcomes-based education and training system in South Africa is the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).
- The creation and maintenance of the NQF is the responsibility of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).
- The culminating outcome on which the South African education system is based is the vision of 'a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice.'
- The seven critical cross-field outcomes and the five developmental outcomes developed by SAQA are meant to move South Africa towards the realization of this vision.
- The School Assessment Team or equivalent structure has responsibility for drafting and then monitoring the implementation of the school's assessment policy in line with national and provincial guidelines.

Planning OBA

unit
2

Introduction

Why assess?

What to assess?

How to assess?

When to assess?

Who should assess?

Recording and reporting

Conclusion

Planning OBA

2.1 Introduction

Why have a module on assessment for learning and teaching – we all assess all the time anyway, don't we? Surely there is nothing more to learn?

Consider the following:
Think about the learning area or subject that you teach and/or manage. Now identify the ways in which you use assessment in your classroom or ways in which assessment is used in classrooms you have visited as a manager. Spend a couple of minutes thinking about the best ways to explain the nature of **your/your school's** assessment practice.

2.1.1 The nature of assessment

Consider the following quotation from Rowntree (1987) in Lubisi (1999:73). Do you think this assertion is true?

> If we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must look into its assessment procedures. What student qualities and achievement are actively valued and rewarded by the system? How are its purposes and intentions realized? To what extent are the hopes and ideals, aims and objectives professed by the system ever truly perceived, valued and striven for by those who make their way within it? The answers to such questions are to be found in what the system requires students to do in order to survive and prosper. The spirit and style of student assessment defines the **de facto** curriculum.

Now consider the following cartoon. What is the relevance of this cartoon to our discussion of assessment?

← *You can't fatten a pig by weighing it!*

2.1.2 The nature of this unit

This unit aims to raise your awareness of the central importance of assessment in the learning and teaching process. We hope that you will come to see assessment not as something done **after** teaching has happened, but something that informs teaching and learning in an ongoing and integrated way. And therefore something that needs to be managed: that is an area in which you will need to provide leadership, assist with planning, organise and monitor. We will touch on all of these aspects in this unit but will elaborate further on the last two in Units 3 and 4.

The structure of this unit has in part been determined by the following 5 questions posed by Rowntree (1987:1) a leading educationist in the UK:

Why assess?

• Deciding why assessment is to be carried out; what effects or outcomes it is expected to produce.

What to assess?

• Deciding, realizing, or otherwise coming to an awareness of what one is looking for, or remarking upon, in the people one is assessing.

How to assess?

• Selecting, from among all the means at our disposal for learning about people, those we regard as being most truthful and fair for various sorts of values knowledge.

How to interpret?

• Making sense of the outcomes of whatever observations or measurements or impressions we gather through whatever means we employ; explaining, appreciating, and attaching meaning to the raw 'events' of assessment.

How to respond?

• Finding appropriate ways of expressing our response to whatever has been assessed and of communicating it to the person concerned (and other people).

In other words, the nature of this unit is to pose questions and then to explore some possible answers. This does not mean that we have ALL the answers, however. What we hope to achieve in this unit is to become aware of the central questions that we should be asking and then to share from our experience **and** yours, how we might begin to answer them. It is the start of a process of enquiry not a once-off event. You will not walk away from this unit knowing all there is to know about assessment: but you should come away with a better understanding of some of the critical issues and where you might be able to find and offer additional guidance and support as an education manager.

The structure of the unit has also been influenced by the assessment policy arena, which we will discuss in a little more detail in the next section. The following diagram, based upon the policy framework, provides some idea of what we think we need to be discussing during this unit.

Outcomes-based Assessment Approaches
(DoE, 2005:66)

Focus on

Planning	Implementing	Recording	Reporting
What skills, knowledge, values and attitudes will the learner	Integrated with teaching and learning.	• Of what? • By whom? • Strengths? • Developmental needs? • Barriers	• Feedback • To whom? • How often? • What information? • What format?
Plan according to Los and ASs	Variety of instruments: assignment; aural test; case study; examination; multiple response questions; role-play; poster; research; investigation; experiment; survey, project, model	Observation Written assessment File/book CASS: ongoing	• To parents • To learners • To district • To SMT • To educators
Types of assessment: • Formative • Summative • Baseline • Diagnostic			

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Participative/collaborative
Flatter structures
Flexible structures
Teamwork
Develop expertise
Stature not status
Culture of learning and teaching
Transparent Performance indicators

Figure 3: An overview of OBA

ASSESSMENT AND POLICY

The central role of assessment in education is recognised in South African national policy in two areas:

- from a personnel perspective
- from a curriculum perspective.

From a personnel perspective the teacher's work in assessment is seen as one of the seven critical roles in which a teacher must demonstrate competence. The *Norms and Standards* policy document (DoE 2000) has this to say about teacher's role as an assessor:

Assessor

The educator will understand that assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process and know how to integrate it into this process. The educator will have an understanding of the purposes, methods and effects of assessment and be able to provide helpful feedback to learners. The educator will design and manage both formative and summative assessment in ways that are appropriate to the level and purpose of the learning and meet the requirements of accrediting bodies. The educator will keep detailed and diagnostic records of assessment. The educator will understand how to interpret and use assessment results to feed into processes for the improvement of learning programmes.

How do you feel about this role description?

The role of assessor is inextricably linked with two other classroom-based roles outlined in the policy document:

Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
The educator will understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning. The educator will also select, sequence and pace the learning in a manner sensitive to the differing needs of the subject/learning area and learners.

Learning mediator

The educator will mediate learning in a way which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning; construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational; communicate effectively showing recognition of and respect for the differences of others. In addition an educator will demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context.

How do you feel about these role descriptions?

From a curriculum perspective, every policy document or guideline that has been issued contains references to the central importance of assessment. The latest of these policy documents is entitled The National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the General and Further Education Training Band (GR – 12) and was published in October 2005 and supplemented at the end of 2006. Key issues

from this document are included as **Text 1** at the end of these materials. The policy covers the following areas: assessment in the NCS; recording and reporting learner performance; portfolios (for learners and teachers); management of assessment records; learner profiles. We will make constant reference to this document as we proceed through the workshop.

The National Protocol document may have been updated by the time you work through this module and should be used as a guide only until we are informed otherwise. It should be read in conjunction with the National Senior Certificate Qualification, the relevant Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Assessment Guidelines at FET level or the relevant (R)NCS Learning Area Policies and Teacher Guidelines at GET level. These documents should already be in schools but can also be easily downloaded from the Department of education website (www.education.gov.za).

2.1.3   Our intended learning outcomes

It is our hope that by the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of the fact that all teachers need to be conscious of and actively seek to use assessment to improve the quality of learning and teaching
- Use your informed understanding of key assessment issues to assess the learning development of your learners appropriately for your specialisation and modify your teaching accordingly
- Develop activities which enable learners to demonstrate the breadth, depth and sophistication of their learning
- Develop assessment activities which enable learners to learn more effectively and you to teach more effectively
- Record and report on your assessment activities appropriately
- Implement the assessment activities and strategies you have designed
- Reflect on their implementation
- Manage the assessment process in your school.

In order to achieve the above, the unit has been divided into six sessions as follows:

2.2   Why assess?
2.3   What to assess?
2.4   How to assess?
2.5   When to assess?
2.6   Who should assess?
2.7   How to record and report?

2.2 Why assess?
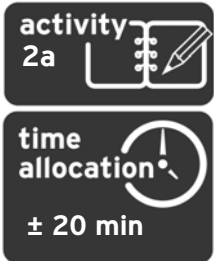
Sipho, a student teacher at your school, comes to you and asks what you understand by the term 'assessment' and why everybody seems to be talking about assessment all the time. Sipho tells you that he does not want to know about methods of assessing, he first wants to know WHY we should bother with it in the first place. It seems to involve an awful lot of work!

How would you respond? (adapted from Lubisi 1999:9)

2.2.1 Rethinking the purpose of assessment

Now that you have thought about the issue for yourself, let's read the following viewpoints and compare them with our own thinking:

> Assessment is a critical element of the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General). It is a process of collecting and interpreting evidence in order to determine the learner's progress in learning and to make a judgement about a learner's performance.
>
> Evidence can be collected at different times and places, and with the use of various methods, instruments, modes and media. (DoE QAPF 2003:21).
>
> Assessment in education entails making sense of a learner's knowledge, skills and values in a process of direct or indirect human interaction … some purposes for which assessment can be used … monitoring learners' progress, grading, certification, selection, evaluation, guidance and prediction. Lubisi (1999:17)
>
> [Assessment] may be formative, enabling a learner or you to check the response against criteria; it may be diagnostic, enabling at least an initial identification of strengths and potential areas of learning difficulty; it will be used to provide guidance and feedback; it may be summative, providing a grade which contributes to the final award; and it may be the source of necessary external discipline without which a learner would fall too far behind in his or her studies. Assessment can also motivate learners through the admission of personal experience as a relevant source of learning and of data for assignments and through the feedback from which you can help learners to develop self-esteem and confidence in their development. [Raggatt in Lockwood, 1994:138]

All of the above understandings of the nature and purpose of assessment focus on trying to understand (and motivate) the performance of individual learners. How do these ideas compare with yours?

In the *Assessment Policy for General Education and Training*, assessment is defined as a *'process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about*

a learner's achievement in order to assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching'. Evaluation, which is an integral part of assessment, is defined in the same document, as *'the process whereby the information obtained through assessment is interpreted to make judgements about a learner's level of competence'.*

Based on these definitions, one could infer that evaluation serves a relatively narrow purpose, namely 'to judge', or 'to ascribe value to'. Judgements could be made at micro (classroom), meso (institutional) or macro (systems) level. At systems level it would include the periodic evaluation of all aspects of the school system in order to determine systemic effectiveness and efficiency and ensuring that all learners derive maximum benefit from the education system.

Systemic evaluation is an integral part of many assessment systems all over the world and is used to monitor the rigour of standards, the effectiveness and efficiency of the system, the identification of systemic strengths and weaknesses, and to provide feedback in this regard to stakeholders. In the South African education system, systemic evaluation takes place at the end of Grades 3, 6 and 9. After each systemic evaluation, the Minister of Education, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, releases a national report card on the system and suggests ways in which it may be improved.

Assessment contrasts with evaluation in that it serves a whole range of functions, amongst which, according to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), are:

- To determine whether the learning required for the achievement of the specific outcomes is taking place and whether any difficulties are being encountered
- To report to parents and other role-players and stakeholders on the levels of achievement during the learning process and to build a profile of the learner's achievement across the curriculum
- To provide information for the evaluation and review of learning programmes used in the classroom
- To maximise learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values defined in the national curriculum policy.

2.2.2   Rethinking the nature of assessment

Before we answer this question, let's first play a little mind game.

Imagine that you and a friend of yours are spectators at an inter-school sport event – soccer, boxing, cricket, swimming, athletics or whatever catches your fancy – or imagine that you are watching it being broadcast on television. As you are watching the event, the two of you comment on the participants' behaviour and/or on the way they are executing various actions – passing the ball, hitting a punch, throwing the javelin, etc. Based on what you see you decide whether or not the specific participant is performing well, not so well or very badly. If you were physically present at the match, and you uttered your comments loudly enough for the participant to hear you, s/he would know whether you thought s/he performed well or badly.

If you had carefully read what is in the text box, you would have noticed that we were actually describing four processes – *observing, comparing, concluding* and *reporting*. While you were watching/observing the athletes, you were collecting evidence about their athletic ability and/or sportsmanship. While doing this you were unconsciously measuring their ability as well as their behaviour against your own expectations. Based on the extent to which their performance matched your expectations, you judged them to be good, average or poor. Your physical response to their performance – applause, cat calls, jeering, blowing horns, etc. – tell them what you think of their game and, more often than not, they respond by changing their tactics and/or trying harder.

What you, as a spectator, were doing was, in fact, exactly what assessors do when they have to make judgments about a person's performance and/or competence. They *construct tasks/tests* to determine how good the person is at what s/he does, *measure* the results of these tasks/tests against specific criteria, *decide/judge* whether or not s/he can be regarded as competent and *inform* her/him what their verdict was. These four processes, in a nutshell, constitute an assessment process.

stop & think !

There are, however, some differences between the kind of assessment that takes place during a match and that which takes place in the workplace or in educational institutions.

Before we discuss what these differences are, we would like you to think about your own assessment practices for a while or, if you prefer, to talk about these with some of your colleagues. The easiest way to do this is to think about or share with others what you, as an educator, do when you assess the performance of learners in your class or, if you are involved in staff appraisals, when you assess other educators. Here we are concerned with your role as a leader of the assessment process: what advice and guidance can you offer; what model does your own practice set for the staff that you manage?

activity 2b

time allocation ± 45 min

INSTRUCTIONS

Once you have spent some time reflecting on your own and your school's assessment procedures, we would like you first to write the procedures you follow in your workbook and then to compare it with the processes that occurred during your assessment of the imaginary athletic event described earlier.

- Based on this comparison, identify in writing – the differences between your 'sport assessment' and the kind of assessment you do as educators in your school.
- Now read our comments on the differences between the two and compare the differences we identified with your own. Are they the same? If not, how do they differ? File your answers in the Activities section of you Learning File/Folder.

our comments
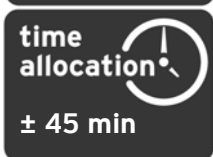
The **first difference** between the two assessments is that the 'sport assessment' was not planned beforehand while teaching/learning assessments and/or staff appraisals are. Unplanned assessments are called informal assessments while planned assessments are called formal assessments. The differences between these two are discussed a little later on.

The **second difference** is that you were probably assessing the athletes in question throughout the entire course of the game. This is called continuous

assessment. Educators also do continuous assessments, but they also do what we call summative assessments, that is assessments that take place at end points of teaching/learning events.

The **third difference** is that your feedback to the athletes was verbal and public. You were probably cheering or criticizing loudly enough for everybody to hear. Educational assessments could also be verbal but, more often than not, they would be in writing, in the form of a report.

The **fourth difference** between the two is that neither you nor anybody else watching the game would have recorded what the athletes were doing and how it was being done, except the media and selectors, if they were present. In education the results of all assessments have to be recorded and stored for future reference.

The **fifth difference** was that your assessments were based on your own expectations of what the athletes were supposed to do. Other spectators might not have had the same expectations and their assessments might, therefore, be very different from yours. You cannot, therefore, claim that your assessment was reliable or more valid than that of any other spectator. Reliability and validity are, however, essential elements of all educational assessments.

Let's investigate these differences more carefully now.

2.2.3   Formal and informal assessment

The first, and most important difference between the kind of assessment that happens at a sport event and the assessment that is typical of educational institutions is that the latter – assessments in educational contexts – is usually planned beforehand. Educators decide beforehand *what* they are going to assess, what *instruments or methods* they are going to use in the collection and interpretation of evidence, *how* they are going to provide feedback and *when* all this is going to happen. In the case of a sport event, assessment is spontaneous – it is a natural part of the interaction between the players and the spectators. The kind of assessment that takes place at a sports event, or in our daily interactions with other people, is therefore, referred to as *informal assessment*. The kind of assessment we, as educators, do as part of our profession, is referred to as *formal assessment*.

To help you remember the differences between these two types of assessment, we have summarized them in the table that follows.

TABLE 1: FORMAL AND INFORMAL ASSESSMENT

INFORMAL ASSESSMENT	FORMAL ASSESSMENT
Incidental events	Planned events
Assessment moments not predetermined	Assessments occur at pre-specified times
Random procedures used for 'collection' of evidence	Specified procedures used for collection of evidence
Notions of progress towards expected outcomes used for interpretation and evaluation of evidence	Specified norms or standards used for interpretation and evaluation of evidence
No recording of evidence, interpretation or judgment	Written or other records of evidence, interpretations and judgements
Feedback spontaneous and incidental	Feedback format specified as part of assessment plan.

You might like to use the table as a resource in discussions on assessment with your staff.

activity 2c

time allocation ± 60 min
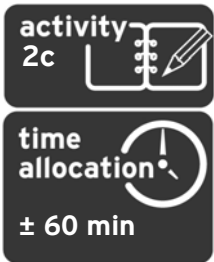
INSTRUCTIONS

- Think back to a time when you were being *formally* assessed for something.
- What was the purpose of the assessment? Why was the assessment done?
- What was assessed?
- Describe, in writing, the way in which evidence was collected
- Describe the procedures and/or standards that were used to interpret the evidence
- What was the final judgement regarding the competence, or performance, of the person who had been assessed?
- Were the results recorded? If so, how was this done? If they weren't what was the reason?
- How were you given feedback?
- Bearing all your answers in mind, do you think that this assessment fostered the kind of positive relationship between you and the assessor that we referred to earlier? Give reasons for your answer.
- Based on your answer to the previous question, do you think assessment is a beneficial or detrimental part of teaching and learning? Give reasons for your answer.

our comments

In the past, assessment often came at the end of a learning process in the form of a formal test. The adoption of an outcomes-based approach to assessment foregrounds the role of assessment as an integrated part of the learning and teaching process. Many of the teachers you work with, however, will probably not have experienced assessment in this way. As a result they are likely to need a lot of leadership and support from you in planning outcomes-based continuous assessment. We think it likely that you will find that a lot of 'assessment' that is currently happening does NOT in fact support the learning and teaching process because it either does not provide the kind of evidence required; it happens too late in the process; it is subject to misinterpretation or teachers simply do not reflect on what the assessment evidence tells them in order to ADAPT their teaching strategies for improved learning. Let us then begin to think about how knowing why we want to assess will affect the decisions about how we assess and what we assess and how we plan assessment.

activity 2d

time allocation ± 60 min
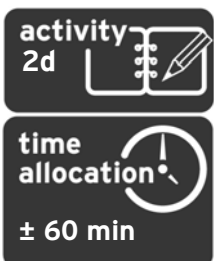
INSTRUCTIONS

- Copy Table 2 and then indicate which of the following teaching/learning assessments could be regarded as formal and which as informal. Give reasons for your answer in each case. The first one has been done for you as an example.
- When you have completed the table, think about how you as a manager would explain to teachers what the point of informal assessment of learners is. This leads naturally into the discussion of formative assessment, and the difference between that and summative assessment.

TABLE 2: ASSESSMENT TASK

ASSESSMENT TASK	NATURE OF ASSESSMENT	REASON
Homework ticked, but not marked, by the teacher	*Informal*	*The teacher is simply checking that learners do homework every day*
A class test, with learners being warned in advance when it would take place		
Submission of a portfolio at the end of a term or year		
Exercises done in class, either individually or in pairs, and marked by learners themselves		
Questions asked by the teacher during the course of a lesson		
A project, given to the class, with detailed instructions of what it should entail, how it will be marked and when it should be handed in		

our comments

As can be seen from Table 2 there is a direct link between knowing WHY we want to assess and deciding what, how and when we will assess. In other words, as we have mentioned before, assessment should be seen as an ongoing process of information gathering, decision-making, action and reflection that needs to be managed.

2.3 What to assess?

2.3.1 Examining content

Prior to the implementation of Curriculum 2005, South Africa's school system was dominated by the Matriculation examination in Grade 12. This was a high stakes examination in so far as it represented the culmination of 12 years of schooling and determined who would make it to university level study and who would not. It has been replaced by the National Senior Certificate (NSC) but public, formal, invigilated examinations will remain a key feature of both the NSC and the GETC.

activity 2e

time allocation

± 45 min

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity provides you with an opportunity to reflect on the nature of examination type assessment activities and why we might do them.
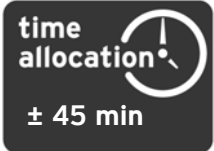
How do you feel about the retention of exit level public examinations in Grades 9 and 12? Try to consider both sides of the issue by copying and completing a table like the one below.

EXAMS FOR GETC AND NSC ARE GOOD BECAUSE	EXAMS FOR GETC AND NSC ARE BAD BECAUSE:

Now compare the following sets of examination questions. What difference(s) do you notice? What problems or challenges do they present?

- Name the four components of the management function.
- Read the following case study. What advice would you give to the manager of this school? Support your recommendations with applicable references.
- Solve for x in the following differential equation.
- The level of water in a harbour entrance depends upon the changing tides and can be represented by the following equation … On the basis of this equation, at what time(s) of the day will a ship with a hull depth of 15m be able safely to leave harbour?
- Discuss the causes of the Second World War.
- Can war be justified? Give your own opinion in response to this question and refer to examples to substantiate your answer.
- Label the indicated parts in the circuit diagram below.
- You are given the following resources … Explain, with diagrams, how you would use these resources to investigate the effect of heat on conductivity.

our comments

What this activity has tried to unpack is the notion that a) there may be more than view on the role of tests and examinations and your own opinion in this regard is important but also b) that tests and examinations do not necessarily have to comprise low level factual recall type tasks.

We know, for example, that in an outcomes-based system, we are concerned not only with testing knowledge acquisition but with assessing demonstrable evidence that this knowledge can be used. We are concerned also with assessing skills, attitudes and values (SKAVs in short).

As assessors, we need to be able to manage both traditional forms of assessment like tests and examinations in ways that emphasise the advantages and mitigate the disadvantages and, at the same time, we need to manage alternative assessment practices that provide us with the understandings about learner performance that tests and exams do not provide.

2.3.2 Managing continuous site-based assessment

Clearly there are things that we want to assess but for which tests and examinations are not appropriate tools. We need to be able to use alternative strategies to assess these things and to complement our testing activities.

GICD (2001:10-12) suggest the following 7 principles for planning meaningful assessment which you can use to help you to evaluate the assessment strategies outlined in your school's learning programmes:

1. **Every assessment should have a clear focus.** There should be a clear link to a learning outcome and an assessment standard as well as to the particular focus of a particular lesson phase.

2. **Every assessment should have a clear purpose.** You will need to ask whether the purpose is to establish a baseline understanding; or to provide formative feedback on progress; or to diagnose a problem area or to provide summative evidence of a completed section of work.

3. **The focus and purpose determine the best method to use.** If the teacher wants to test factual recall, she can ask a question but if she wants to assess the learners' ability to work in groups, then she will need to get them to work in groups and then observe them as they work. She will then need to develop an observation tool for this assessment purpose.

4. **Assessment activities should match the desired learning outcomes.** "If the desired outcome is a simple one, like memorising a law of natural science, then the assessment activity can likewise be simple. All that is necessary is for the learner to recall the law by rote. But if the desired outcome is more complex (such as to demonstrate an understanding of the law) then the assessment activity will have to be more complex.

5. For example, to assess learners' understanding of the 'Right-Hand Rule of electromagnets', you could require them to:
   a. state the rule
   b. specify where and when it applies
   c. use the rule to determine the direction of an electric current and the position of the poles on an electromagnet

    d. use the rule to predict what would happen if the current through its coil were to be reversed." (GICD 2001a:11)

6. **Assessment should concentrate on selected learning outcomes.** Not everything has to be assessed and not everything that is important has to be assessed formally. Focus on evidence that points to achievement of the learning outcomes. There should be enough evidence of progress but not too much!

7. **Assessment should be built into the process of teaching and learning from the start.** It is important to understand assessment as a process not an event and as part of teaching and learning and not separate from it. The following diagram (GICD 2001a:12) tries to illustrate this.
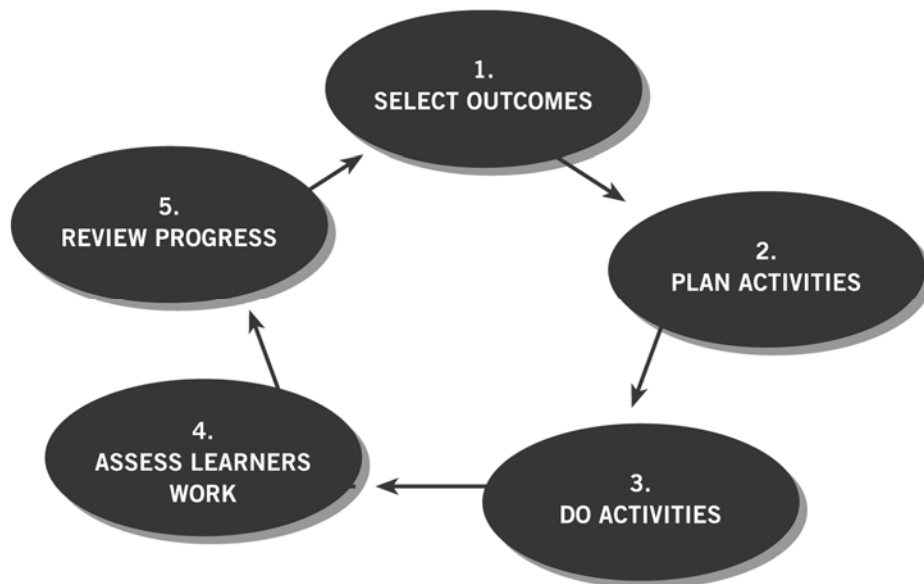
Figure 4: GICD teaching cycle

- The more realistic and "authentic" an assessment activity is, the more likely it is to produce accurate and reliable information. For example, when assessing mapwork skills, have learners draw a map of the school, or a map from their home to school or use an atlas to plan a journey from home to Durban or Cape Town, rather than writing a test on what is a map scale etc.

Most schools use a portfolio to provide evidence of continuous assessment, but often the portfolio is simply a box into which everything gets thrown in an indiscriminating and disorganised way.

If your school is making use of portfolios for continuous assessment purposes, you will want to ensure that:

- The portfolios are well organised.
- They illustrate depth and breadth of learning, as well as learner progress in knowledge, skills, attitudes and values not otherwise assessed.

- They illustrate the range of learning undertaken, for example in Physical Science we can identify 7 discrete skill areas: group work; write up; manipulative/procedural; observation/measurement; recording; interpreting data; concluding/analysing findings (GDE c. 2000).
- There is a rationale for inclusion of items as well as the assessment thereof and of the portfolio as a whole.
- The portfolio meets the requirements set out in relevant policy documents.

activity 2f

time allocation

± 45 min

INSTRUCTIONS

This is an activity that we suggest that you try out at a contact session and then replicate with any necessary amendments during a departmental or learning area/subject group meeting at your school.
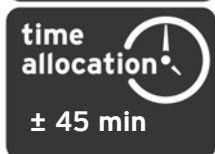
Working in subject specialist groups, choose a learning outcome and one or more assessment standards and identify an appropriate context within which to explore the learning outcome.

Now plan two different learning activities that will provide you with the some of the evidence that you need to judge whether learners are making progress towards achievement of the outcome …

our comments

You will have realised that we are no longer interested in simply finding out only what learners can remember. Instead we want to assess the learners' progress towards achievement of the learning outcomes and the relevant assessment standards. This means we need assessment approaches that will tell us about:

- *learners' competence in a variety of **s**kills*
- *learners' acquisition of and ability to use new **k**nowledge*
- *learners' **a**ttitudes towards what they are learning and the impact these have on their engagement and achievement*
- *learners' **v**alues and the impact they have on their engagement and achievement*
- *SKAVs in short.*

Having thought about WHY we want to assess and WHAT we want to assess, the next step in our planning is to think about HOW we need to assessment to get the kind of information and insight that we need.

2.4 How to assess?

Geyser (in Mda and Mothata 2000) outlines some of the ways in which the move to outcomes-based assessment practices has required changes. He presents his perceptions in the form of a dichotomy between 'conventional' and outcomes-based practices:

TABLE 3: ASSESSMENT PARADIGMS

CONVENTIONAL ASSESSMENT	OBET ASSESSMENT
Single attribute assessment: isolated knowledge or discrete skills	Multi-dimensional assessments: knowledge, abilities, thinking processes, meta-cognition and affective factors
Behavioural approach to learning and assessment; accumulation of isolated facts and skills; assessment activity separate from learning; discrete, isolated knowledge and skills	Cognitive approach to learning and teaching; application and use of knowledge, assessment integrated with learning and training; integrated and cross-disciplinary assessment
Assessment focuses on retention of knowledge	Assessment is broad, covering a number of assessment criteria that include skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and disposition
Assessment by teachers/trainers and external examiners who mark work and calculate the final result in numerical terms	Assessment includes assessment by the teacher, self-assessment, peer-assessment, resulting in a descriptive statement of what the learner has achieved
Major assessment is individual assessment: learners are assessed individually with much secrecy surrounding the test	Assessment criteria are discussed with the learners; group, peer- and self-assessment; co-operative learning and products; collaborative skills
A largely predefined curriculum structure with an assessment and accreditation system in place	Training programmes, instruction and assessment are viewed as flexible and alterable means for accomplishing clearly defined learning outcomes
Curriculum and assessment systems are treated as ends in themselves	Assessment based on clearly defined framework of performance outcomes
Comparative (norm-referenced); test/exam driven	Criterion-referenced assessment; continuous assessment
Assessment by a test or an example determines the amount that the learner remembers	Assessment/evaluation over time, includes practical demonstration of what learners know and can apply
Permanent records	Performance profiles
Single case assessments	Samples over time, e.g. portfolios
Marks as achievement	Performance as achievement
Time-based credits	Performance-based credits
Pen-and-paper testing; textbook based knowledge, academic exercise, and implicit criteria	Authentic testing: use of knowledge in real life; meaningful contexts, explicit criteria for assessment

Testing and grading every step of the way. All mistakes become part of a permanent record that accumulates and constantly reminds of past errors	Mistakes are treated as inevitable steps along the way when learners develop, internalize and demonstrate high-level competencies.

(Mda & Mothata 2000:29-30)

The Qualifications and Assessment Policy Framework (QAPF) Grades 10-12 (General) (DoE 2003) identified the following requirements for appropriate assessment practice which have been replicated in all subject statements for FET:

Assessment should:

- use a variety of instruments;
- use a variety of methods;
- be understood by the learner and by the broader public;
- be clearly focused;
- be integrated with teaching and learning;
- be based on pre-set criteria of the Assessment Standards;
- allow for expanded opportunities for learners;
- be learner-paced and fair; and
- be flexible. (DoE 2003:22-3)

The new approach to assessment emphasises the need for Continuous Assessment (CASS) integrated into the normal learning and teaching process so that evidence of learners' performance is built up over a period of time and using multiple approaches in order to build as comprehensive a picture as possible (see the minimum guidelines in the National Protocol and addenda).

Implementing the policy calls for the teacher to be able to select appropriate **types** of assessment and to utilize different **methods** of collecting assessment evidence to suit different purposes.

2.4.1   Types and methods of assessment

Chapter 4 of most subject statements outlines:

- Types of assessment
- Methods of assessment
- Methods of collecting assessment evidence.

Types of assessment

- Baseline
- Diagnostic
- Formative
- Summative.

Methods

- Self-assessment
- Peer assessment
- Group assessment.

Methods of collecting assessment evidence

- Observation-based

- Test-based
- Task-based.

2.4.2 Reflecting on types of assessment

The use of the terms *summative*, *continuous* and *formative* is typical of assessment discourse. A common understanding of these terms is, therefore, crucial not only to discussions on assessment but also to effective assessment practice.

Summative assessment

The term, summative, is derived from the word, sum, which, according to the dictionary, means 'total amount resulting from the addition of items; brief expression that includes, but does not specify details; substance; summary; sum total'.

Applied to assessment, the term would refer to the 'gathering of evidence to form an overall impression of a person's ability, knowledge or competence'. In our sport example, a summative assessment would be something like, 'It was a good game!' In a meeting, it would be something like, 'This was really a worthwhile, informative, or challenging meeting!'

Another meaning of 'summative assessment' is 'assessment that occurs at the end of a task or period of learning'. Siebörger calls assessment that takes place at the end of a period of learning 'terminal assessment' to distinguish it from continuous assessment.

According to Sieörger (1998:24), summative assessment is used 'to report to others about the achievements of a learner'. Summative/terminal assessments are part and parcel of educational practice, sometimes conducted at the end of a lesson or unit, sometimes at the end of a module or theme, sometimes only at the end of a term, semester or year.

Spady, informed by the notion of assessment as a means of 'summing up' what someone has learnt, defines summative assessment as assessment aimed at determining a person's 'culminating competence', that is, the 'sum total' of knowledge, understanding or ability that s/he has acquired over a period of time. You would notice that Spady's term implies both meanings – sum total of knowledge as well as at the end of a period of learning.

Continuous assessment

The term, *'continuous'*, according to the dictionary, means *'connected, unbroken, uninterrupted in time or sequence'.* Think of the sporting event again. The collection of evidence was continuous – it happened all the time, while you were 'watching' the event. You did not assess, then judge, then assess again, then judge again. Collection, interpretation and judgment happened simultaneously, *'uninterrupted in time or sequence'.*

This kind of assessment is part and parcel of classroom practice. While an educator is, for example, explaining a concept or a process, s/he notices that one or more learners are frowning. This 'evidence' that the learner is not following the

explanation provides the teacher with feedback on the effectiveness of his/her explanation and, usually, s/he will stop, ask the learner what the problem is, explain again, perhaps in a different way and check that the learner does understand before s/he continues.

Continuous assessment could also refer to assessment that has the *monitoring* of learner progress as purpose. A language teacher, requiring learners to write an essay for example, would require learners to first do a mind-map, then prepare a draft, then edit it and only then submit the essay for marking. If the teacher assesses each of the sub-tasks, providing the learner with constructive feedback, s/he is doing continuous assessment. Because s/he monitors the learner's work on a step-by-step basis, s/he is able to pick up learning barriers and to correct them immediately, before they become a serious problem.
Continuous assessment therefore has both summative possibilities (capturing information for recording purposes over time) but also formative possibilities.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is assessment that is used 'to inform educators and learners about a learner's *progress* in order to improve learning' (Siebörger, 1998: 24).

Have you picked up the difference in purpose between summative and formative assessment? The one – summative assessment – is aimed at determining culminating *competence*, that is the sum total of knowledge, skills, values and/or attitudes acquired during the course of a learning experience. The other – formative assessment – is aimed at monitoring the learner's *progress* towards culminating competence so as to pick up weaknesses/flaws and address them timeously. Formative assessment is, therefore, always aimed at *supporting* the learner in his/her efforts to acquired more knowledge and/or develop more complex skills and is often, *but not always*, informal and continuous.

stop & think !

These types of assessment are related to what Rowntree discusses under the heading 'Why assess?' They are not the only purposes of assessment. They are the purposes specified as relevant for schools in the various policy documents. The Reader, *Assessment in Outcomes-based education*, which you received with the module on Portfolio Development, provides you with a concise, tabular, summary of the different types of assessment, indicating that there are four types of assessment, namely *formative, summative, baseline and diagnostic*.

Study this summary and, once you are relatively sure that you understand the difference between the four types listed there, determine whether *baseline* and *diagnostic* assessments:

- Assess competence or progress
- Are terminal or ongoing
- Are more formative or summative in nature.

It is important to understand that different kinds of assessment give us different kinds of information. Therefore the assessment method that we select depends largely on the **type of outcome** we would like to assess. Bloom's well-known

'taxonomy of educational objectives' (Bloom 1956) distinguishes between the following kinds of learning:

- Psychomotor outcomes: learning outcomes that involve physical movements e.g. in playing tennis or playing the piano
- Affective outcomes: learning outcomes that involve feelings, attitudes and values
- Cognitive outcomes: learning outcomes which involve intellectual skills and which can be classified in a hierarchy from 'lower-order' to 'higher-order' skills: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation.

Certain types of assessment method are more suitable for certain types of learning outcomes, as shown in the table below. In selecting an assessment method, we should determine what type of learning outcome we want to assess, and the select a method that will be suitable for that type of outcome.

TABLE 4: USING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY TO HELP DECIDE HOW TO ASSESS

TYPE OF OUTCOME	SUITABLE METHODS OF ASSESSMENT	EXAMPLES OF LOS	EXAMPLES OF ASSESSMENT METHODS
Psychomotor	On-the-job observation, simulations	The learners should be able to paint a wall.	- Observe the learner painting a wall in the workplace - Observe the learner painted mounted cardboard in the classroom (simulation).
Affective outcomes	Any method can be adapted to assess these outcomes of a reflective element is built in	The medical students should demonstrate concern and empathy for their patients as individuals	- Workplace observation - Simulations (role plays) - Selected-response questionnaires - Constructed-response answers - Diaries
Cognitive outcomes			
Knowledge and comprehension	All the assessment methods involve the testing of knowledge (recall) and comprehension, but to test these	The learners should be able to list the main classes of vertebrate animals.	'In the list of animal classes below, make a cross next to those that are classes of vertebrate animals.' 'List the main classes of vertebrate animals.'

TYPE OF OUTCOME	SUITABLE METHODS OF ASSESSMENT	EXAMPLES OF LOS	EXAMPLES OF ASSESSMENT METHODS
	outcomes specifically, selected-response items are probably the most suitable, as well as short, constructed answers.	The learners should be able to calculate the power used, using the formula watt = newtons x metres over seconds	• 'If a machine can lift 200 newtons over a distance of 1 metre in 20 seconds, what is the machine's power? • 3000 watts • 2000 watts etc. or 'Calculate the power of a machine if …'
Application	On-the-job observation, simulations (e.g. case studies, products, portfolios, projects, constructed answers	The learners should be able to design household cleaning devices.	• Portfolio of products • Project involving design of one complicated product
		The learners should be able to apply negotiation skills to resolve conflicts amicably.	• On-the-job observation by supervisor • Role-plays • Case studies
Analysis, synthesis and evaluation	Any assessment method but particularly 'performance' methods and constructed answers	The learners should be able to devise a management strategy for an organisation. The learners should be able to draw up a conservation plan for their conservation area.	• Workplace project involving actual performance of activity, possibly jointly assessed by instructor and workplace supervisor • Case studies
		The learners should reflect on their own progress and find ways of developing their skills	• Diaries and • Self-assessment schedules

from Saide 2005

INSTRUCTIONS

activity 2g

time allocation ± 2−3 hours

This is an activity that we suggest that you try out at a contact session and then replicate with any necessary amendments during a departmental or learning area/subject group meeting at your school.
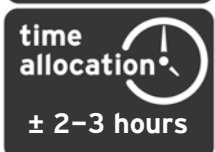
This is quite a long activity but is broken down into short parts. The purpose of the activity is for you to help one another to demonstrate your understanding of the changing assessment policy in a practical way.

You will work in groups of about 6 people and groups will work in clusters of four groups in a round robin activity. You will need four sheets of flip chart paper.

Step 1: Decide on a language learning activity (or other kind of activity as agreed) that you would want to see learners do. Formulate a learning outcome statement for the activity (remember SKAVs) and describe the activity. When you have written up your outcome and activity, pass your work on to the next group in your cluster.

Step 2: You have received an outcome and activity from another group. On a separate sheet of paper, outline a baseline assessment activity that would be appropriate for this purpose. Think about what methods you would use. When you are ready, pass **both** sheets of paper on to the next group in your cluster.

Step 3: You have now received two sheets of paper from a previous group. On a separate sheet of paper, outline how you would manage formative assessment for this activity. Think about what methods you would use. When you are ready, pass all **three** sheets of paper on to the next group in your cluster.

Step 4: You have now received three sheets of paper from a previous group. On a separate sheet of paper, outline a summative assessment activity to complete the cycle of learning. Think about what methods have already been used and what methods you think should be used given the original intention expressed in the learning outcome. When you are ready, pass the **four** sheets of paper on to next group in your cluster.

Step 5: You should now have received back your original outcome statement and activity, together with suggestions from other groups on baseline, formative and summative assessment tasks/strategies. Do you agree with the suggestions made? Why/why not? What has the activity revealed about differing understandings of the task, of OBA practice and of cooperative learning and what suggestions do you have about how to overcome any problems you have identified in this activity. In other words, perform a diagnostic assessment.

In the previous activity we explored the use of different assessment types and methods to meet the requirements of different points within a learning cycle. However, we need to also think about how to use a variety of assessment strategies to cope with diversity among our learners themselves.

2.4.4 Assessment for inclusivity

White Paper 6 on *Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (2001) makes it very clear that all learners need to be assessed within the same OBE curriculum and assessment framework. This means that our practice must be consistent with the following principles:

- All learners can learn given the necessary support
- OBE is learner-paced and learner based

- Schools create the conditions for learners to succeed
- There is a shift from categorizing/labeling learners according to disability towards addressing barriers experienced by individual learners
- Provision should be based on the levels of support needed to address a range of barriers to learning.

Assessment must be based on the following four OBE principles:

Design down

This means that the outcomes to be addressed through teaching and learning are first clearly stated before developing the teaching and learning activities the learners will be engaged in and which of those will be assessed in a variety of ways.

Clarity of focus

This means that everyone involved must have a clear picture of what is wanted at the end. This implies that educators must ensure that learners are clear about the criteria against which they are to be assessed and therefore what they are expected to demonstrate.

High expectations

This implies that educators must assist learners to reach their full potential. They should measure progress against the previous achievements of a learner and not against those of other learners. Emphasis should be placed on learners progressing and experiencing success. Separate curricula should not be developed and learners should be allowed to demonstrate their competence in a manner which is most appropriate to their abilities.

Expanded opportunities

This means that educators must find multiple ways of exposing learners to learning opportunities that will help them demonstrate their full potential in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

Outcomes-Based Assessment (OBA) should therefore:

- Assist learners to reach their full potential
- Be participative, democratic and transparent
- Involve learners actively using relevant knowledge in real-life contexts
- Be integrated throughout the teaching and learning process
- Be used for remedial as well as enrichment purposes
- Allow expression or demonstration of knowledge in multiple ways
- Be linked to individualised, performance-based assessment
- Offer a variety of vehicles to assess multiple views of intelligence and learning styles
- Be less likely to be culturally biased to learners who are limited in proficiency in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). (DoE 2002:5-6)

a) Addressing barriers to learning

activity 2h

time allocation

± 2–3 hours

INSTRUCTIONS

This is an activity that we suggest that you try out at a contact session and then replicate with any necessary amendments during a departmental or learning area/subject group meeting at your school.

This is again quite a long activity but is broken down into short parts. The purpose of the activity is for you to help one another to demonstrate your understanding of the changing assessment policy with regard to diversity in a practical way.

You will work in groups of about 6 people and groups will work in clusters of four groups in a round robin activity. You will need four sheets of flip chart paper.

Step 1: Decide on a subject specific activity that you would want to see learners do. Formulate a learning outcome statement for the activity (remember SKAVs) and describe the activity.

Step 2: On a separate sheet of paper, outline a possible barrier to learning based on experiences from within your group.

Barriers to learning could be:

- **Systemic** e.g. lack of basic and appropriate learning support materials, assistive devices, inadequate facilities at schools, overcrowded classrooms, etc.
- **Societal** e.g. severe poverty, late enrolment at school, etc.
- Rooted in **inappropriate pedagogy**, insufficient support of educators, inappropriate and unfair assessment procedures, etc.
- Could also emerge from **disabilities** (neurological, physical, sensory, cognitive etc.) that are located within the learner.
    When you have written up your outcome and activity and barrier to learning, pass your work on to the next group in your cluster.

Step 3: You have received an outcome statement, an activity outline and a barrier to learning from another group. On a separate sheet of paper, outline an assessment strategy that will address the barrier to learning and allow the learner(s) to work towards achievement of the outcome. Mention whom you will involve in the process. When you are ready, pass all three sheets on to the next group in your cluster.

Step 4: You have now received both a problem regarding barriers to learning and a solution. Evaluate the solution proposed and, on a separate sheet of paper, propose an alternative solution to the problem. Do not forget to identify WHO is involved in your alternative assessment strategy. When you are ready, pass all four sheets of paper on to the next group in your cluster.

Step 5: You have now received back your original problem scenario and two possible solutions. Which of the two solutions do you prefer and why? Can you think of a third alternative?

our comments

Having completed the above activity, we should be better placed to understand the role of the following support structures with regarding to accommodating diversity and overcoming barriers to learning:

- *The School Assessment Team*
- *The School Based Support Team*
- *The District Based Support Team*
- *Parents*
- *Other support structures e.g. social services.*

You will also have explored a range of creative ways to address some barriers to learning. The following table, taken from p.16 of the policy document for inclusivity (DoE 2002), summarises some of these possibilities:

TABLE 5: HOW TO ASSESS FOR INCLUSIVITY

	VISUAL BARRIERS	DEAFNESS OR HARD OF HEARING	DEAF–BLINDNESS	PHYSICAL BARRIERS	LEARNING DISABILITIES
Tape-Aid	☺			☺	☺
Braille	☺		☺		
Enlarged print	☺			☺	
Dictaphone	☺			☺	☺
Video		☺			☺
Sign language interpreter		☺	☺		
Computer/typewriter	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Alternative questions/tasks	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Additional time	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Amanuensis	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Oral to teacher	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺

b) Planning for other forms of diversity

Coping with diversity in the classroom does not always manifest itself in the form of overcoming barriers to learning. All learners are individuals with individual learning experiences, different kinds of strengths and weaknesses and different learners like to learn in different kinds of ways. Sometimes we will want to get them to work within their preferred learning styles and sometimes we will want to challenge them to work in a different way (e.g. the independent learner who must try to work in a group; the active, hands-on learner who must try to become more reflective).

All of this calls for us to adopt an integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessing. Howard Gardner has proposed a theory of multiple intelligences that offers a useful framework for us to consider when we are developing learning and assessment activities that address the diverse needs of our learners. He identifies seven kinds of intelligence. The following table is an attempt to summarise his thinking and to illustrate some implications for teaching and assessment practice. It might be useful as a poster in your working area and/or in your classroom.

TABLE 6: A SUMMARY OF GARDNER'S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE THEORY

INTELLIGENCE TYPE	POSSIBLE CAREERS	PREFERRED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
Linguistic	Journalist, author, poet, playwright, interpreter, translator …	Likes to read, speak, listen and write; sensitive to the different functions of language and the meanings of words

INTELLIGENCE TYPE	POSSIBLE CAREERS	PREFERRED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
Logical/ Mathematical	Mathematician, scientist, medical doctor, accountant, artisan, veterinarian, computer programmer or technician …	Likes to solve problems; can work with numerical patterns and long chains of reasoning
Bodily/ Kinesthetic	Dancer, sportsman, sportswoman, artisan …	Likes to be active; has an ability to control body movements and to handle objects skilfully
Interpersonal	Sales, marketing, psychologist/counsellor …	Likes to work with other people; display an ability to respond appropriately to the moods, characters, motivations and desires of other people
Intrapersonal	Philosopher; artist …	Likes time to think and reflect alone; can act on the basis of self-knowledge of own strengths, weaknesses, desires and intelligences
Musical	Composer, musician, disk jockey …	Likes to sing and/or dance; have an ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timbre; and an appreciation of the forms of musical expression
Spatial/ visual	Navigator, sculptor, landscape gardener, interior designer, architect …	Likes to work with pictures, shapes, colours, diagrams; have an ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately
Naturalistic	Veterinary surgeon, astronomer, botanist, conservationist	Notices patterns and things from nature easily; makes keen observations about natural changes and inter-connections; likes animals and likes to know and remember things about them

The following short fable illustrates what could happen if we fail to take account of and to celebrate the diversity in our classrooms and the changing needs of our society.

The animal school

Once upon a time, the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a "new world". So they organized a school.

They adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming and flying. To make it easier to administer the curriculum, ALL the animals took ALL the subjects.

The duck was excellent in swimming, in fact better than his instructor; but he made

only passing grade in flying and was very poor in running. Since he was slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming in order to practice running. This was kept up until his web feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming. But average was acceptable in school so nobody worried except the duck.

The rabbit started at the top of the class in running, but had a nervous breakdown because of so much make-up work in swimming.

The squirrel was excellent in climbing until he developed frustration in the flying class where his teacher made him start from the ground up instead of from the tree top down. He also developed stiff and cramped legs from too much effort and then got C in climbing and D in running.

The eagle was a problem child and was disciplined severely. In the climbing class he beat all the others to the top of the tree, but insisted on using his own way to get there.

At the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well, and also run, climb and fly a little, had the highest class average and was top of the class.

The wild dogs stayed out of school and fought the tax levy because the administration would not add digging and burrowing to the curriculum. They apprenticed their children to an ant-eater and later joined the dassies and duiker to start a successful private school.

You may be interested to learn that the above fable was written by Dr George Reavis in 1948. His message seems just as relevant over fifty years later.

So, each learner is an individual who learns, thinks, understands and expresses themselves in a different way. So how can we assess such a wide diversity? Let's explore this a little.

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activity 2i

time allocation
± 20 min

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer the following question as best you can. If you don't know 'the answer' then guess/hypothesise/imagine a response.
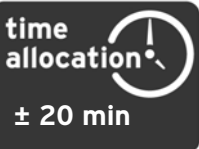
Question; Why do cheetahs have spots?

One way of assessing the diverse responses to this kind of open-ended question is to use the SOLO taxonomy suggested by Collis & Biggs 1986 and reported by Killen in Maree & Fraser (2004:78-80).

SOLO stands for 'Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome'. The SOLO taxonomy provides 'a general framework for systematically assessing quality' [of learning] by considering the structure of the learner's written or oral response.

Evaluate your own response above against the following example responses and how they have been classified in the taxonomy. Use this experience to decide

whether you think the SOLO taxonomy is one that you think you might be able to use in your own classroom.

TABLE 7: SOLO TAXONOMY

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE RESPONSES	CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE RESPONSE	SOLO 'LEVEL' DESCRIPTOR
• 'I don't know'. • 'So that they are different from lions.'	• No attempt to answer the question. • The response is irrelevant.	**Pre-structural** (there is no structure to the answer)
'Because it makes them hard to see when they are stalking prey.'	The statement is true, but it focuses on just one evolutionary factor, not any of the biological factors.	**Uni-structural** (the answer focuses on just one relevant fact)
'The spots are formed by melanin in the skin an. Cheetahs developed in this way so that they would be camouflaged in their normal environment.'	Both the points mentioned are correct, but no attempt is made to relate them.	**Multi-structural** (the answer is based on several relevant concrete details)
'The spread of the melanin in the skins of all animals (cheetahs, zebras, etc.) is determined by the switching on and off of a chemical reaction as the embryo develops. In cheetahs, the melanin-producing reaction is turned on for just a short time. Cheetahs probably evolved this way after a chance mutation because it suited their hunting environment.'	The biological explanation is correct and it is linked to probable evolutionary factors.	**Relational** (the answer focuses on ideas that relate all the relevant details)
'The colours of animal hides (such as cheetahs) are examples of mathematical patterns that can be described with partial differential equations. The size and shape of the embryo during the time when the melanin production is occurring determines whether an animal has spots, stripes or no pattern. The melanin starts at points on the skin and spreads to form spots. Long, thin body parts like the cheetah's tail develop stripes because the spots merge. In evolutionary terms, the spots probably started as a mutation that gave cheetahs an advantage when hunting, so natural selection determined which ones passed on their advantageous genes. In their particular hunting environment, stripes were not an advantage and that is why mutations such as the king cheetah are rare in the wild.'	The answer contains all the relevant points, explains how they are related, and mentions other abstract ideas that were not part of the original question.	**Extended abstract (the answer uses abstract principles to explain the relationships and it recognises other possibilities)**

As Killen observes, the example illustrates the need for teachers to be clear about the level of understanding that they want learners to achieve.

In this section we explored response to the question of HOW to assess. In many ways this session forms the core of the unit, which is why two quite long activities were devoted to it.

The following points were made:

- There are different kinds of learning outcome that need to be assessed.
- Different kinds of assessment activities are required by different kinds of learning outcomes.
- Different kinds of assessment activities are required by different kinds of learners if we are to give life to the policy on inclusivity.
- Assessment is an ongoing activity not an isolated event: when to assess therefore requires careful planning.

2.5 When to assess?

2.5.1 Recognising the iterative nature of outcomes–based assessment

From all that we have discussed so far, you should easily be able to recognise the essential nature of outcomes-based assessment.

Let's look at the process again:

- We start by identifying the learning outcomes and associated assessment standards that we want to focus on.
- We find out where our learners are in relation to these expectations.
- We plan a learning programme with specific activities that will help them progress towards the outcomes one step at a time.
- We constantly check learners' progress and give them feedback to ensure that they know how they are getting along.

---

stop & think ! Write one sentence that describes the nature of outcomes-based assessment in a nutshell.

We can conclude from what we know so far that outcomes-based assessment is formative by nature, but also includes summative assessment as well. Feedback from the teacher during formative assessment lets the learners know how they are doing but also provides the teacher with insight into whether the lesson is working or whether it has to be adapted. When summative assessment is well-developed and matched to individual differences, it will also provide more information about the successfulness of both the learners' learning and the teachers' teaching over a period of time and in clustered conceptual areas.

We have seen that teaching, learning and assessment are integrated in our new outcomes-based approach. We have also seen that formative and summative assessment can have an important 'teaching' function. A good teacher constantly checks the learners' progress and modifies his/her teaching plans to meet the learners' needs: so assessment is built into the regular pattern of classroom activities.

Assessment is therefore seen as an essential part of the learning process, not a result of learning and not an add-on at the end so that we have something to write in our mark books!

A question that often arises in response to this new way of thinking is: 'How can one assess continuously – surely no-one can cope with all that extra marking?'

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stop & think ! What do you think? Does continuous assessment mean lots more tests and lots more marking?

Think about the following possible alternatives:

- watching a learner working in a group
- listening to a learner explaining a concept
- reading a learner's evaluation of a model, drawing or graph
- involving others, including the learners themselves, in the assessment process.

1. Baseline
To find out what learners know and can do at the start of a learning programme so that it can be geared towards meeting their learning needs.

2. Formative
To find out how learners are getting on *during* a learning programme in order to give them feedback and modify the programme where necessary.

3. Diagnostic
To find out the nature and extent of learners' problems so that they can be remedied.

4. Summative
To sum up what learners know and can do *at the end* of a learning programme so that their progress can be measured.

Figure 5: The link between different forms of assessment in CASS

2.5.2 The cycle of continuous assessment

our comments

Continuous assessment means that you assess your learners at each critical step of their learning. This should be an ongoing cycle as illustrated above.

The cycle also summarises two other forms of assessment. Explain:
- who uses this type of information?
- for what purpose it is used?
- when must it be used?

activity 2i

time allocation

± 60 min

INSTRUCTIONS

Read through the following case study in the left-hand column of the table. Imagine you are observing Mr Diphoko as part of an IQMS evaluation. In the right-hand column, comment on what happened with regard to assessment using terms that we have explored to date in this unit. Try to identify the different assessment stages in the case study.

case study

Comment

Mr Diphoko is a Grade 7 Natural Sciences teacher. He decided that he wanted to teach his learners how people can use simple science to solve practical problems. He spoke to a colleague, Mrs Holomisa, who teaches Social Sciences to the same class and found that she was teaching them about voyages of discovery and olden-day explorers. Mr Diphoko saw this as a wonderful opportunity to teach the learners about magnetism by getting them to make a working compass similar to those used by the early explorers. The learners were eager to try this out. Mr Diphoko told them that if they could find a way of doing it, they would be able to tell directions at night or on a cloudy day.

Mr Diphoko began by referring to the learning outcomes for the natural Sciences learning area in the NCS. He decided to plan his lesson around five basic steps in the scientific process as these steps applied to all three learning outcomes. He thought the learners would learn a lot about science if they actually went through the five steps themselves. The steps are:
- identify the problem
- collect information about the problem
- analyse the information and come up with solutions
- try out the solutions
- evaluate the solutions to find the best one.

case study

Comment

Mr Diphoko began by asking the learners questions about compasses and discovered that they did not really know how compasses worked. So he split them into groups of four and asked them to brainstorm everything they knew about magnets.

Mr Diphoko then gave each group a small red-and-blue bar magnet and some items to test. The learners tested to see which items stuck to the magnet and which did not. As the learners worked, Mr Diphoko went from group to group to offer encouragement and advice and to ask questions. One of the questions Mr Diphoko asked each group to explore is what happened to the objects that had been attracted if they were subjected to continued exposure to the bar magnet over a period of time.

Mr Diphoko then asked the learners to write up a short report on what they had learned about magnetism from their experiments so that he could see if they had identified the key learning points he had intended.

Convinced that the learners had understood the basic principles of magnets, Mr Diphoko then involved them in an activity to explore how early navigators used the principles of magnetism to help them navigate. However, the learners found it difficult to make the leap in understanding from magnetism to compasses and after a number of false starts, the learners began to grow restless and unruly.

So Mr Diphoko changed the activity. He gave the learners the materials and a set of instructions to enable them to make their own simple compasses and they then used them to 'navigate' their way around the school – writing up reports on the directions they needed to move in to get from one point of the school to another.	
When Mr Diphoko then got them to return to the exploration of early compasses used by the olden-day explorers they immediately understood the link and one remarked that he couldn't wait to tell their Social Science teacher what they had been doing in their Natural Sciences lesson.	
As a homework for that week, Mrs Holomisa and Mr Diphoko set a joint assignment in which they asked learners to write a short report on how an understanding of magnetism had helped the early explorers to navigate their way around the globe.	

our comments

In this section, which we have adapted from Ferreira (2003:31-59), we explored the question "When do we assess?"

We realised that learning, teaching and assessment are so integrated that in fact assessment is a continuous process – it happens all the time.

However, continuous assessment does not mean that we are constantly testing and marking because a lot of the assessment that we do is of a more informal nature.

There are three main stages in a learning programme where we have to particularly careful in planning our assessment:
- *At the beginning – planning some form of baseline assessment*
- *During – conducting formative assessment to monitor progress and diagnostic assessment to address problems*
- *At the end – planning some form of summative assessment so that we can measure the overall progress that has been made.*

Another way in which we can make continuous assessment more manageable is to involve others in the process. We will explore this in the next section …

2.6 Who should assess?

2.6.1 Who assesses whom?

In the previous section we saw how two teachers were able to work together to set a common homework task that would address the assessment needs of two different learning areas. This seemed like a good way for learners both to realise the interconnected nature of the curriculum and to manage their homework tasks without getting overloaded.

However, the focus in that scenario was on teachers assessing learners.

As Lubisi (1999:12) notes, however, Rowntree's definition of assessment which we met right at the start of this workshop does not say anything about who assesses whom and from this we can infer that teachers are not the only assessors (and learners are not the only assessed).

Lubisi goes on to offer a useful analytical tool that can help us to think about the possibilities and which we have adapted slightly below:

TABLE 8: ASSESSOR-ASSESSED RELATIONSHIPS (ADAPTED FROM LUBISI 1999:13)

learners assess learners self-assessment or in pairs and in groups	learners assess teachers individually and collectively
teachers assess learners individually, in pairs and in groups	teachers assess teachers

There are four quadrants in this summary table.

In quadrant 1, learners assess other learners in an assessment strategy that has come to be known as self- and peer-assessment and which we will elaborate on below.

In quadrant 2, teachers assess learners and this is what most people think of when they hear about assessment. It should be noted that even here there are options to explore such as whether it is appropriate to assess individually or collectively.

In quadrants 3 and 4 we identify approaches to assessment that teachers hardly ever seem to think about.

In quadrant 3, we have learners assessing teachers. This could mean an individual teacher asking learners to evaluate his/her classroom performance over a period of time. This is something that is recommended as part of the IQMS process. We think it is important but we will not address it in this module.

In quadrant 4, we have teachers assessing other teachers. This is a requirement of the IQMS process. Again we feel that it is very important but again we will not explore it in this particular module.

stop & think !

Have you ever tried to use peer assessment? How did it go – were there any problems?

If you have not tried to use peer assessment, give some reasons why not.

Now rate yourself on the following 4-point scale with regard to your own competence as an assessor.

I AM A TERRIBLE ASSESSOR   **I AM A MASTER ASSESSOR**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Do you think your colleagues would assess you at the same level?
How does this make you feel as a leader?

2.6.2   Self– and peer–assessment

A few years ago, the publisher Kogan-Page produced a book called *500 Tips on Assessment* which is cited in Saide (2005). The following guidelines are adapted slightly from the extracts cited by Saide. How well do these guidelines resonate with your own experience?

a) Starting to use self–assessment

There are many levels on which learner self-assessment may be used, ranging from activities simply to promote reflective learning to formal strategies which allow learner self-assessment to count in their final summative assessment e.g. in a portfolio. If we can help our learners to develop self-evaluative skills, so that they accurately able to judge the effectiveness of their own performances, we will equip them with skills that will help them to continue to learn throughout their lives. This should ensure they achieve better performance in further studies and are more sought after by employers. The following suggestions should help you to decide when to introduce learner self-assessment into your learning programmes.

- **Make self-assessment an integral element of learning.** Help learners to become lifelong learners who can evaluate their own performances after they have finished formal study. This is a valuable skill which will help them in their later careers. Make it a habit that students self-assess their own formal homework assignments before they hand them in to you for assessment.
- **Think of the things that no-one but learners can really assess.** For example, learners alone can give an assessment as to how much effort they put into a task, how strong their motivation is in a particular learning area, or how much they think they have improved in something over a period of time.
- **Give learners practice at positively evaluating themselves.** For example, give them nine small pieces of paper and ask them to list nine qualities or skills they have, and then to prioritise them in a ranking order one to nine.
- **Emphasise the crucial relationship between assessment standards, evidence and self-evaluation.** Help learners to make balanced judgements about themselves that relate directly to the assessment standards, by providing clear evidence of what has been achieved.

- **Encourage the use of reflective accounts and journals to promote self-evaluation.** By encouraging learners to review their own performance regularly through journals and reflective accounts in their portfolios, they can build up a picture of their progress over a period of time.
- **Support learners in self-assessment.** Give them lots of guidance at the outset, then progressively let them take a greater degree of responsibility for their assessment as their understanding of the process matures.
- **Help learners get to grips with assessment standards.** Let them discuss what the standards will mean in practice, and get them to describe exactly what sorts of performance or evidence will demonstrate achievement of the standards.
- **Help learners to prepare for self-assessment by assessing peers**. It is often easier to make judgements about their own work when they have participated in looking critically at what others have done.
- **Include self-assessment when assessing group processes.** Frequently, learners are asked to peer-assess one another's contribution to group tasks. It also feasible for them to assess realistically what they have added themselves to the process, applying the same notion of assessment standards and evidence as they did to their peers.
- **Use open learning materials.** Most such materials include a lot of self-assessment activities in one way or another. Usually the primary benefit of these is not strictly self-assessment but rather the use of feedback to learners who have attempted the activities. However, they can be useful in the cause of developing self-reliant and self-critical learners.
- **Provide computer-based self-assessment opportunities for learners.** It can help learners to find out a lot about how their learning is going when computer-based packages are available in a library or resource centre, where they can check their learning in privacy. Such packages can also provide feedback and direction as well as giving learners a quantitative indication of the state of their learning.
- **Provide self-assessment opportunities as diagnostic aids.** Open learning or computer-based packages can include sets of questions designed to help learners identify which sections of their work may need particular attention. The packages can also include remedial 'loops' which learners experiencing particular difficulties can be routed through.
- **Use self-assessment to establish existing competences.** Self-assessment exercises and tests can be a quick way of enabling learners to establish how much of their prior learning is relevant to the prerequisite knowledge for their next lesson or learning programme. This can help learners to avoid wasting time studying things they have already covered sufficiently.

stop
& think !

Comment on the above suggestions:
- which of these strategies do you already use in your school?
- which of these strategies do you think you could use?
- which of these strategies could you NOT use and why?
- can you suggest any additional strategies?

b) Starting to use peer-assessment

Increasingly, peer-assessment is being used to involve learners more closely in their learning and its assessment and evaluation, and to help learners really understand what is required of them. It can have enormous benefits in terms of learning gain, but it is not to be regarded as a short-cut to teachers wishing to lighten their assessment burden. Setting up peer-assessment may well involve greater effort from teachers in the early stages, although long term there should be savings in teacher time. The following suggestions may help you get started with learner peer-assessment.

- **Take it a bit at a time.** Some people (learners and teachers) find the use of peer-assessment very radical, so it is a good idea to introduce it gradually, on a small scale, until you, your colleagues and your learners are confident about how it will work best.
- **Keep everyone in the picture.** Tell everyone what you are doing and why. Learners and colleagues need to understand the thinking behind what you are doing, to avoid them perceiving it as a soft option or abdication of responsibility. If they understand that peer-assessment is actually part of the learning process, they may find it more acceptable.
- **Provide mark-free rehearsal opportunities.** This helps learners get the hang of what is required of them, and also builds in an opportunity for learners to get interim feedback at a stage when there is time to bring about improvements.
- **Provide really clear assessment criteria.** Learners should not be able to over-mark friends or penalise enemies if the assessment standards are unambiguous and explicit. All marks should be justifiable by reference to the standards and to the evidence of achievement of them.
- **Make peer-assessment marks meaningful.** Some argue that peer review is really only suitable for feedback purposes. However, if learners are to take peer-assessment seriously, it should count for something, even if it is only a small proportion of the final grade. You may prefer to 'parallel mark' with teacher grades counting as well as averaged peer grades if this is appropriate. Another strategy is to sample and moderate and then effect global amendments.
- **Moderate peer-assessment.** To ensure that learners see peer-assessment as fair, teachers must overview the marks awarded and provide a 'court of appeal' if learners feel that justice has not been done. This may mean offering vivas to any dissatisfied learners.
- **Keep the system simple.** Try not to give yourself really complicated addition and averaging tasks to do after peer-assessment has taken place. Too many separate components make it laborious to arrive at final marks. If the numerical side can't be simplified, it is worth using computer programmes to do the donkey-work! Remember that it is the feedback built into the system that will promote more effective learning and teaching.
- **Involve students in the assessment standards.** You can do this by involving learners in the generation of assessment standards and in the weighting given to each criterion. Alternatively, you can provide the standards and give learners a lot of opportunities to ask questions about what they really mean.
- **Allow plenty of time.** Just because you can assess a poster display or an essay fairly quickly doesn't mean that learners will be able to do so too, especially if groups are assessing other groups and are required to provide a

rating by consensus. Presentations always over-run and learners will tend to make snap decisions and 'guesstimates' when under pressure regarding time.

- **Monitor learner achievement.** It's a good idea to review how well learners are peer-assessing, by the same kinds of methods you may use to review your own assessment, to ensure reliability of marking. It is often reassuring for learners (and colleagues) to see that peer-assessment based using explicit assessment standards, and based on the production of clearly specified evidence, produces data hat are very similar to marks produced by teachers themselves.

---

stop & think

Do you use peer-assessment in your school? Why/why not?
Comment on the usefulness or otherwise of the guidelines provided.
Is there anything you think should be added?

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our comments

On the basis of the discussion to date, we would argue that:
- *It is not only learners who need to be assessed: teachers need to be assessed too – by their learners and by their peers. This kind of assessment is built into the IQMS process.*
- *Not all assessment needs to be formal or formally recorded and not all assessment needs to be done by the teacher.*
- *In the new OBA system, we need to give thought to how we can make better use of:*
- *Learner self-assessment*
- *Learner peer-assessment (in pairs and in groups).*
- *This does not mean that teachers can abdicate all responsibility for assessment! In fact, teachers, and their managers, need to become more accountable for the assessment they do, and the ways in which they record and report this assessment to others.*

2.7 Recording and reporting

Now that we have thought about the why, what, how, when and who of assessment, we need to think about how we will record and report assessment and the kinds of tools and templates we might want to use. Let us start by looking at an example.

activity 2j

time allocation ± 60 min

In the previous section, we talked about learners assessing teachers. Killen (2000:193) suggests the following instrument could be used for this purpose. Try it out with one of the groups that you teach.
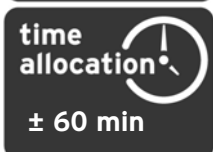
Lesson evaluation
It is important for teachers to know how students feel about the instruction they receive. Any feedback that you can give will help the teacher to make it easier for you to understand future lessons. **Please think about what the teacher did *in this lesson* and place ticks in the boxes to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.**

Agree strongly	5
Agree	4
Neither agree or disagree	3
Disagree	2
Disagree strongly	1

IN THIS LESSON OUR TEACHER:	1	2	3	4	5
1. Was well organised.					
2. Gave a confident presentation.					
3. Was enthusiastic about the subject.					
4. Knew a lot about the subject.					
5. Told learners what they would learn in this lesson.					
6. Did not go too fast.					
7. Did not go too slow.					
8. Explained the meanings of words that I did not understand.					
9. Made the information easy for me to understand.					
10. Presented the lesson in steps that I could follow.					
11. Spoke clearly.					
12. Made it easy for me to see what was important.					
13. Made the lesson interesting.					
14. Used examples that I could understand.					
15. Encouraged learners to ask questions.					
16. Gave satisfactory answers to learners' questions.					
17. Made me think for myself.					

IN THIS LESSON OUR TEACHER:	1	2	3	4	5
18. Encouraged learners to be involved with the lesson.					
19. Used the whiteboard, chalkboard or overhead projector effectively.					
20. Used charts, models or other things to help me learn.					
21. Gave me time to think about new information.					
22. Asked questions to check learners' understanding.					
23. Gave a useful summary of the main points of the lesson.					

What are the strengths of this tool in terms of recording for the assessment purpose outlined?

What are the weaknesses of this tool in terms of recording for the assessment purpose outlined?

Would you use this assessment tool with your learners in your classroom? Why/why not?

The assessment tool in this activity is an example of a rubric. What other assessment tools do you know of or use?

Recording is the act of writing down or storing in some or other form *(electronically, on audio or videotape, in the form of photographs, etc.*), the evidence of performance and/or the judgements based on such. In educational contexts, evidence is typically recorded on mark sheets or in electronic databases. This is an important part of assessment and, especially, of quality control because it promotes educator/assessor accountability. Also, learners have the right to appeal against judgements and, unless the evidence has been recorded there is no basis for the appeal and/or for the assessor to defend him/herself.
In something like the sporting event we described earlier there is no need for recording – if the event is over, it is done with. The only exception would be if you were a national selector, in which case you would have conducted a formal assessment of the athletes, measuring their performance against specific criteria. You will then have to keep records of your assessment to justify the inclusion or exclusion of a particular player in the national team.

Reporting takes place when all other assessment processes have been completed. It involves the assessor, or someone else who has been tasked to act on his/her behalf, to inform the person who had been assessed of the final result/judgement. In educational situations the report card serves as feedback to learners as well as parents and is an important means of communication between educators and the parent community.

In the case of sport, if there were selectors present, the judgement would be announced orally, at a meeting with all the players and, sometimes, the press. In educational contexts, reporting is usually done in writing, in the form of a report. Oral feedback is, however, quite common in teaching-learning situations where a teacher, for example, discusses a learner's homework with him/her or comments on a learner's behaviour or attitude.

2.7.1 The relationship between what and how to assess

Validity and reliability

Assessment is regarded as **valid** (or has **validity**) when it serves the purpose for which it was conducted. Let's use our sport event again. If the selector was looking for a goalkeeper, he should be assessing the way the goalkeeper is playing, not the way he is dressed or the way he wears his hair. The same rule holds for teaching/learning assessments: a language teacher who sets a test aimed at determining comprehension/understanding, should not mark learners down on spelling or sentence construction. Another test or assignment will have to be designed to test these – an essay, or a letter, for example.

Reliability, on the other hand, is associated with consistency. In other words, the same assessment instrument (test, assignment, project, etc), used by different assessors on different occasions, should yield the same results.

As you would realize if you think of the sport event again, absolute reliability is very difficult to achieve. One person watching the event will think the referee is extremely fair while another person, watching the same event would think the referee is biased. There could be many reasons for this difference in judgment. The most obvious is that the two spectators support different sides in the match and would, therefore, judge the referee in terms of the extent to which s/he is biased in favour of the team supported by the spectator concerned. It could also be that the spectators have different ideas about what a referee should or should not do: in other words, the criteria against which they judge his/her competence are not the same.

The same happens in education. Two classes could write exactly the same test but the results of the test could differ markedly depending on the person who marks the tests. One marker may be very lenient while another may be very strict. You can think for yourself which class is going to do best.

Validity and reliability are principles of assessment. The claims of validity are pertinent in discussions of what you assess and the relationship between what and how you assess. In other words, it also relates to Rowntree's questions.

Reliability is a principle that governs how you assess. The main point to be made is that the claims of reliability and validity are often in tension: The most reliable form of assessment (such as a final high stakes matric examination) is not the most valid way of assessing certain of the outcomes that need to be assessed – such as values, or practical application in a real context.

This is one of the reasons why the results of formal assessments are always interpreted in terms of some or other frame of reference. The three most common frames of reference used in assessment are *self-referencing*, *norm-referencing* and *criterion-referencing*.

Self-referencing is used by individual learners to monitor their own progress. They continuously compare their last performance in a specific area with their preceding performance in the same area to determine whether or not they are improving. A goalkeeper would, for example, count how many goals he saved at

a particular match against the number of goals he saved previously. A middle distance runner would compare his times, trying to improve his PB ('personal best') in each race. Learners typically compare the *marks* or symbols they obtained in a specific test against the marks they obtained previously. Alternatively, they could compare their performance in terms of the comments made by the assessor, for example, *competent*, *not yet competent*, *improved competence*, etc.

Norm-referencing refers, not to the way an assessment is constructed, but to the way the results are interpreted and/or evaluated. This procedure is common in external examinations and in assessments that have a research purpose. What happens is that the marks of all learners who wrote a particular examination are added together to get a total. The group average is obtained by dividing the grand total by the number of learners who wrote the examination. Judgements about individual learner performance are then made in terms of the average (or *norm*): an individual's performance would then be described as 'average' above average' or 'below average'.

Usually, all the learners' marks are then plotted on a graph that, if the examination was of the appropriate standard, should take the shape of a bell curve (Figure 6).

mean = median = mode
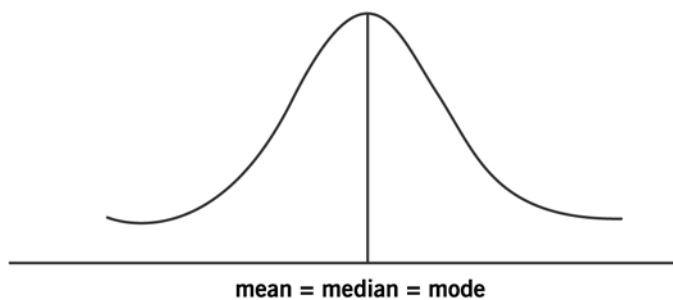
Figure 6: Bell curve

Normal distribution curve – mean (average), median (mid-point) and mode (most common mark) are the same.

Should the bell curve be skewed to one or the other side, this would indicate that the examination was either too easy (Figure 7) or too difficult (Figure 8). Assessors could then decide to raise or decrease learners' marks in order to restore the bell curve to its ideal shape.

mean median mode
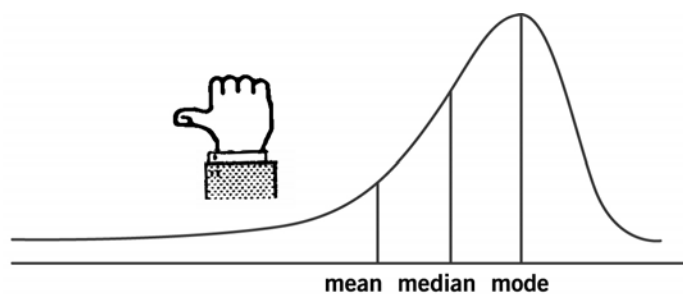
Figure 7: Skewed bell curve indicating assessment was too easy
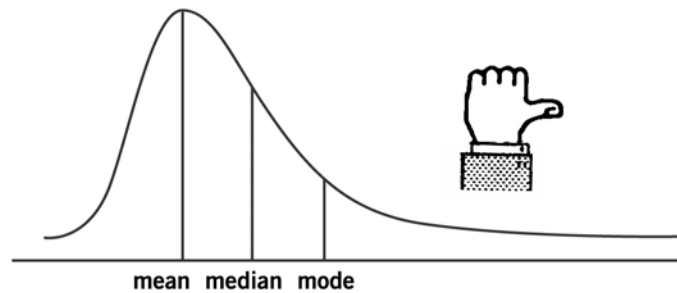
Figure 8: Skewed bell curve indicating assessment was too hard (Unisa STA102-J 1981:71-72)

As already indicated, norm-referenced assessment is a very valuable research tool. A researcher who is interested in comparing the mathematics ability of girls with those of boys would, for example, set both groups the same mathematics test, plot the results on a graph and, based on the graph, decide which group is more mathematically able.

In a **criterion-referenced** system, assessors judge performance against specified, pre-determined standards that spell out the knowledge, skills or attitudes that each learner is expected to demonstrate in order to be deemed competent. If a learner satisfies all the criteria s/he obtains 100%; if s/he satisfies only half of the criteria s/he obtains 50%. The first learner (who has 100%) will obviously be judged as 'competent'. The second learner, depending on the 'pass mark', which would also have been pre-determined, could either be deemed competent (if the pass mark is 50% or lower) or incompetent (if the pass mark is higher than 50%).

The difference between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment lies in the fact that judgements about the performance of an individual learner in a norm-referenced system are always influenced by the performance of all the other learners who sat for the examination, while in criterion-referencing this is not the case. On the surface, norm referencing is, therefore, unfair towards the individual learner. In addition, a criterion-referenced approach is more transparent and therefore more in keeping with outcomes-based assessment practices.

activity 2k

time allocation

± 45 min

INSTRUCTIONS
- Carefully reread the notes on self-referencing, norm referencing and criterion referencing.
- Having done this, critically reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of each from an educator's point of view.
- Now draw the table below in your workbook and complete it in terms of your reflection.
- You could also, for your own development, read up about these three kinds of referencing in literature on assessment and add the information you gather from this exercise to the table.
- Based on what you have written in your table, which form of referencing do you think is the most appropriate for school education? Give reasons for your answer.

TABLE 9: REFERENCING

REFERENCING MODE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Self-referencing		
Norm-referencing		
Criterion-referencing		

2.7.2 Problems with recording and reporting assessments

activity 21

time allocation

± 45 min

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is taken from GICD Workbook 3 (2001:4-8).
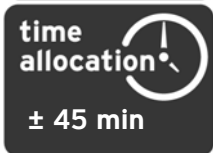
The cartoon strip below looks at some familiar scenes in a school staff room as teachers compile their end of term reports. It highlights some of the problems which teachers faced in trying to summarise learners' performance during the term in a simple, clear way when OBA was first introduced. Since then some of the terminology has changed but the central challenge remains. The teachers respond to these problems in a variety of ingenious ways. See if you recognise some of them and consider which are educationally sound.

This activity should help you to:

• analyse and compare various methods of recording and summarising learners' performance
• reflect critically on the strengths and limitations of your own records and reports and those of the staff you manage.

Figure 9: Recording and reporting assessments (GICD 2001a)

Figure 10: Recording and reporting assessments (GICD 2001b)
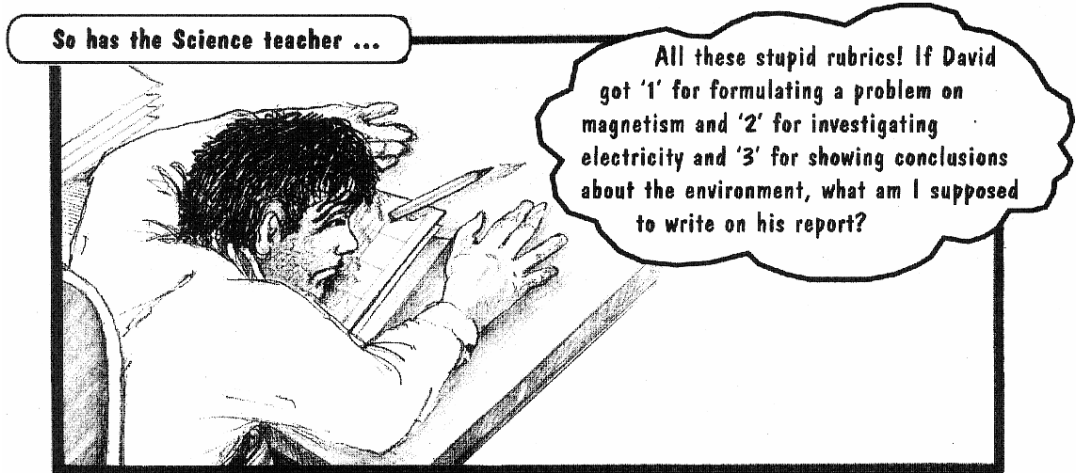
Now think about what happened at Lorentzville Primary School.

- What's wrong with the Social Science teacher's method of arriving at an overall percentage for this learning area?
- To what extent does the average percentage awarded by the Mathematics teacher reflect David's performance?
- Do you agree with the Languages teacher's conclusions?
- What do you think of the method used by the LO teacher?
- What is the real source of the NS teacher's difficulty?
- What does the report actually tell David's parents about his strengths and weaknesses?

our comments

We suggest that you compare your answers with your peers in a contact session and then use the activity to provoke similar discussion and debate at your own school.

Collecting evidence is one thing. Interpreting it is something quite different and yet there are similarities between the two processes. Remember that the Learning Outcomes told us what we had to assess while the Assessment Standards told us how to do it, i.e. what tasks/instruments we could use for assessment.

Before we can judge whether or not a learner has satisfied the standard – i.e. whether s/he knew and could do what was described in the LO and AS, we need to determine how well they performed the task. For this we need task-specific criteria, which are related to, but not necessarily derived from, the Assessment Standard.

To put it differently, the Assessment Standard gives us an indication of which tasks – tests, debates, models, etc. – to use in the assessment of specific learner competence. Assessment criteria spell out how the task should be done – what should be included, how long should it be, etc. The extent to which the task satisfies the assessment criteria determines whether the learner will be regarded as competent or not yet competent. In this sense assessment criteria provide assessors with a 'measurement instrument' or 'yardstick' that they could use to interpret and/or judge the quality of learner demonstrations of competence. The criteria also give the assessor clues as to the areas in which the learner fared best and worst, suggesting which areas need to be re-learned

Example

A language teacher asks learners to write a summary of a book they have read. The 'summary' is the assessment *task*.

The teacher tells learners that their summaries will be assessed for *accuracy, neatness, spelling, punctuation, style,* and *number of words*. These elements are *writing criteria* and are specific to the task given. The criteria for a speech would have been very different.

The quality of writing that the teacher expects of the learners will, however, be determined by the Assessment Standards, which spell out exactly what is expected of learners at particular grade levels. S/he will not, for example, expect a Grade 4 learner to write a summary of 300 words but she may well require this of a Grade 9 learner.

The standard, therefore, describes what is regarded as *normal* – the norm – in a particular grade and are used as yardsticks to judge whether the work a learner

does is up to the standard that one can expect of an *average* learner in that grade or whether his work is better (excellent) or worse (poor) than expected.

It is important to remember that, in outcomes-based assessment, the criteria as well as the standards should be given to learners before they start with the assessment task. Only then will they know exactly what the teacher/assessor expects of them. This, of course, will help them to focus their efforts on meeting those expectations and, consequently, they should do better than they would have otherwise. For an example of such an assessment task, refer to your reader, **Text 5**.

One of the instruments used by assessors to interpret and/or 'measure' learner's knowledge or ability is a memorandum. Where we are interested in more than testing knowledge, we are more likely to use a rubric.

A *rubric* is a set of guidelines that helps assessors to distinguish between learner achievements that differ in quality. The guidelines describe or define the elements *(knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc.)* that indicate differences in the quality of the responses learners give.

activity 2m

time allocation

± 5–6 hours

Study the rubric (Table 10) that follows. The teacher who developed this rubric wanted to find out whether or not the learners in her class could work in a group. She gave them a topic to discuss and used this rubric to assess both their group behaviour and their oral communication skills.

Pretend that you are the line manager of the teacher who designed this rubric. Enter a standard that she could have formulated in each of the empty blocks. You could do this off the cuff or you could refer to the NCS document for the learning area or subject if you think this will help. Your ability to provide practical examples of this nature will enhance your professional esteem in the school.

TABLE 10: ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

LEARNING OUTCOME Learners demonstrate that they can participate in a team or group discussion.			
CRITERIA	**ASSESSMENT STANDARDS**		
	Excellent	**Average**	**Poor**
Conduct	States opinions firmly and argues point when necessary	Occasionally ventures an opinion	Seldom if ever contributes to the discussion
	Shows respect for others' opinions	Tends to be domineering and/or argumentative	Regularly interrupts others when they speak
	Engages with all team members		Communicates on a one-on-one basis only
Speaking	Audible, clear enunciation		Mumbles and/or stutters when speaking
		Sometimes speaks too loudly or too softly	
	Uses complete sentences		

LEARNING OUTCOME			
Learners demonstrate that they can participate in a team or group discussion.			
CRITERIA	**ASSESSMENT STANDARDS**		
	when speaking		
Listening	Takes notes while listening to others	Fidgets while others are talking	Distracted by other groups and what happens outside the classroom
	Asks for clarification when necessary	Misses important points	Responses bear no relation to what was said

- Having completed this rubric as a trial run, consider Table 11, which illustrates some of the criteria against which a teacher's competence as an assessor should be judged according to stipulations in the *Norms and Standards for Educators*. This is the kind of issue you will engage with in performance and developmental appraisal exercises for the IQMS.

TABLE 11: THE TEACHER AS AN ASSESSOR

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT STANDARDS		
		Excellent	**Average**	**Poor**
Foundational competence				
Practical competence	Variation in assessment practices	Appropriate use of different assessment practices		
	Appropriateness of assessment	Assessment appropriate to phase, grade, subject or learning area		
	Learner feedback	Feedback helpful and sensitive to learner needs		
	Judgment/evaluation of learner competence	Judgments of learners competence are fair, valid & reliable		
	Recording and reporting of academic progress	Efficient recording of academic progress		
Reflexive competence				

- Compare the information in this table with the role descriptors in the Norms and Standards for Educators to see how we have split the descriptors into criteria and standards for excellence.
- Using our breakdown as an example, fill in the blanks in this table with appropriate criteria and standards. You should use the Norms and Standards as your resource document in doing this activity.
- Now organize a workshop/meeting with HoDs and, in conjunction with them, fine-tune your rubric by adjusting either the criteria or the standards or both.
- Assess your own competence as an assessor against the criteria and standards in your adjusted rubric. Have the HoDs follow this process with their staff members.
- File your fine-tuned 'Assessor Rubric' and the results of your self-assessment in the Activities section of your Learning File/Folder.

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activity 2n

time allocation ± 2 hours

Select an assessment instrument that has recently been used in your school. Ask teachers in your school to use the instrument as a basis for the design of a rubric.

Ask them to use the rubric to assess the performance of at least 5 learners who carried out this particular assessment task.

Having marked their tasks/portfolios/performance demonstrations against the rubric, teachers should write one or two paragraphs in which they make a judgment about (a) the competence or not of these learners and (b) the usefulness of the rubric. Discuss the findings during a staff meeting.

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activity 2o

time allocation ± 2 hours

Ensure that each HoD completes activity 2n with their staff and then goes on to develop an assessment year plan for each subject/learning area (this should be apparent from completed Word Schedules but may require review).

The assessment year plan should meet or exceed the minimum recording requirements set out in policy and involve a range of different forms of assessment to address diverse learning styles. Note that in some cases it will be necessary to design alternative assessment tasks and instruments in order to satisfy inclusivity requirements.

2.7.3   Requirements for recording and reporting assessments

Scherman (building on Siebörger) in Maree and Fraser (2004:146) reminds us that assessment is a process which can be illustrated as follows:

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY	ASSESSMENT AGAINST OUTCOMES	MODE OF FEEDBACK	RECORD KEEPING	REPORTING
- Description of what has been done and under what conditions - Individually, in pairs or in groups - Preparation for the activity to be undertaken	- Outcome assessed means of assessment standards	- Oral comment - Written comment - Group or individual - Grade - Mark	- Educator - Learner - Mark book - Learner profile - Portfolio	- To learner - To parents - To other educators - To another school - To the Department of Education

GICD 3 (2001:58) summarise the key requirements for recording and reporting as follows (we have slightly adapted this summary to take into account the new NCS requirements):

- Teachers are required to keep a record book containing details of learners' performance and their progress towards the curriculum outcomes. This book is a legal document which parents may ask to see at any time. It remains the property of the school when the teacher leaves. In addition, teachers must help learners to keep portfolios of their work and must assist the school administration to keep its learner profiles up to date. (See the relevant section in the Assessment Protocol attached as an appendix).

- The traditional mark book is inadequate as a record of learners' work because it gives no information about how the quality of that work was assessed. Such information is essential to outcomes-based education. Teachers therefore have to develop a format for an expanded record book which can incorporate sufficient detail about what knowledge and skills have been addressed, what level of competence the learner has attained and what direction future learning and teaching will take. Grades and symbols must be clearly related to outcomes statements, and for the purposes of summative reporting, must be cumulative in some way. To be practical, the record book must also be easy for the teacher to administer.

- To meet all these criteria, the teacher needs to start with a curriculum framework containing the detailed learning outcomes, assessment standards and proposed contexts and assessment tasks which have been planned at phase, grade and individual lesson level. Then it will be necessary to develop appropriate assessment tools to assess the evidence of learner achievement of the relevant assessment standards.

- The record for an individual learner should include:
- assessment of the learner's performance on specific activities
- periodic, summative, on-balance assessments of the learner's performance on important skills or components of learning outcomes and assessment standards of a particular learning area
- periodic, summative, on-balance assessment of the learner's overall performance in the learning area
- the teacher's considered comments on the learner's progress and developmental needs, based on assessments of his/her work and a review of the teacher's informal notes and observations.

  (The minimum requirements for recording and reporting are set out in the assessment protocol and addenda referred to earlier.)

- Although continuous assessment is part of good teaching, not all assessments need to be recorded. Informal observations, for example, may be jotted down in a note-book as a reminder to the teacher to follow up on certain questions, issues or problems. But these should not be transferred into the record book immediately because they may, n further investigation or reflection, prove to be inaccurate or unimportant. Also, there is no point in keeping detailed records that add nothing to what one already knows about a learner. What the teacher should look for and record is new and revealing evidence of the learner's progress.

Teachers are required to compile portfolios of work which give evidence of learner progress towards the target outcomes. Portfolios should be designed as

'living creations', simple and easy to use, accessible to learners and genuinely illustrative of the learner's skills and abilities. (The minimum requirements for portfolio recording and reporting are set out in the assessment protocol appended to this workshop manual.)

Consider the guidelines set out by the GICD (adapted) above.
- Are these guidelines realistic?
- What problems have you encountered with recording and reporting.
- Share with the colleagues in your group, some of the ways in which you have sought to overcome these problems.

Gawe and Heyns (in Maree and Fraser 2004:171) remind us that the assessment process is cyclical and not linear and integrated with learning and teaching, as illustrated in the following (adapted) diagram:

Teaching Focus
What must be taught?

Assessment standards
(How will the educator know if the learner has achieved the learning outcomes?)
The specified standard is *measurable.*

Assessment strategy
(What methods of assessment will enable learners to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes?)
The specified standard is *monitored.*

Learning and teaching strategy
(What methods will best help learners achieve the learning outcomes?)
The assessment of the specified standard leads to *decision-making.*

Figure 11: The cyclical nature of assessment

2.8 Conclusion

In this unit we interrogated assessment as a concept. We considered the nature and function of assessment in general using Rowntree's leading questions. We also looked at three frames of reference – self, norm and criterion referencing – that could be used for the interpretation of assessment results. You had the opportunity to refresh your memory as regards assessment, to reflect on and compare variations in the nature, purpose and timing of assessments and to engage in self-assessment activities. Our focus in the unit was on equipping you as an educational leader with some of the key understandings that will inform your engagement with learners, staff, parents and colleagues on assessment issues.

You will have seen that in order for the assessment process to work, as educational manager you will need to:

- Provide leadership.
- Give guidance and support.
- Model best practice in your own assessment.
- Support planning
- Staff should be expected to be able to justify their assessment practices in terms of why, what, how, when, who is involved in assessment and also how they record and report: this requires careful planning.
- Coordinate assessment
- It is necessary to establish teams at school, phase, grade and subject/learning area level to plan, implement and evaluate assessment practices and to ensure these teams have scheduled time and the necessary resources to do the work that must be done. We revisit this issue in Unit 3.
- Monitor assessment
- In OBA assessment is seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning process providing information to both learners and teachers on the progress being made and where it may be necessary to provide more support or greater challenge. It is therefore important to monitor the process to ensure that what has been agreed is being implemented and that teaching is indeed informed by information from assessment. We return to this issue in Unit 4.

It should be clear from the above that the school needs an appropriate assessment policy and structures to support the process.

The next unit focuses specifically on assessment in an outcomes-based system, introducing you to the kind of structures, procedures and processes involved in the coordination of outcomes-based assessment in your institution.

key points

- Assessment is a ***process,*** not a once-off event.
- Assessment has a twofold ***purpose***: to collect evidence and to make judgements based on such.
- If assessment ***results*** are to be credible the collection of evidence and the subsequent judgements must be valid and reliable.
- In order for these processes to be regarded as valid and/or reliable, assessors must not only know what ***evidence*** to look for but also where, when and how they must collect such evidence.
- The credibility of assessment results, therefore, depends on the way assessment is ***managed*** – planned, organised, controlled and evaluated.
- The way in which assessment is to be managed must be set out in an institutional ***assessment plan***.
- The institutional assessment plan must be informed by an institutional ***assessment policy***.
- The institutional policy must reflect the principles and procedures of related national and provincial ***policies.***
- All of these – the assessment purpose, plans, policies, management procedures, principles, etc. – must reflect the vision and mission of the institution and the ***education system*** as a whole.

Coordinating outcomes-based assessment

unit 3

Coordinating outcomes-based assessment

3.1 Introduction

There are still many people all over the world who feel that assessment is nothing more than a form of power play, one in which assessors try to control others and/or where they have carte blanche to harm or boost others' self-esteem. These people argue that assessment fosters competition, invites corruption and sets people up for failure. Based on this argument they propose a 'pass one pass all system'.

On the other side of the debate are those who argue that assessment is necessary, that the self-esteem of those whose knowledge and/or competence is not up to standard will be harmed anyway because they will be required to do work that is far too difficult for them and, because they will keep on failing, they will eventually lose all confidence in themselves. If they had been assessed, so the argument goes, and the assessor had picked up their weak points, these could have been addressed and the person could have moved on to more complex learning and/or tasks.

Both these groups of people agree, however, that assessment for its own sake is useless. In other words, every single assessment should serve a very specific purpose, e.g. to diagnose weaknesses or strengths; to rank learners according to their performance; to assess the extent of learners' knowledge or skills in a particular area; to determine whether or not a person should be given recognition for prior learning; to determine which career path would be the most suitable for the learner; to amend the curriculum or learning programme, etc.

As indicated in the previous units, both the South African government and SAQA are convinced of the value of assessment and maintain that assessment and evaluation perform a crucial role in the maintenance of a quality education system. According to the *Assessment Policy for GET and ABET* assessment helps educators to:

- Determine whether the learning required for the achievement of the specific outcomes is taking place and whether any difficulties are being encountered
- Report to parents and other role-players and stakeholders on the levels of achievement during the learning process and to build a profile of the learner's achievement across the curriculum
- Provide information for the evaluation and review of learning programmes used in the classroom
- Maximise learners' access to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values defined in the national curriculum policy.

These purposes are summarised in the **National Protocol on Assessment** (October 2005:5), which states that assessment 'assists teachers, parents and other stakeholders to make decisions about the progress of learners', with classroom assessment, in particular, providing 'an indication of learner achievement'. Assessment is, therefore, an integral part of teaching and learning. Consequently, teachers should use assessment:

- To monitor and provide feedback on learner progress, and the results of assessment as basis for future planning
- To identify learning difficulties so that appropriate remedial help and guidance can be provided
- To obtain an overall impression/picture of a learner's knowledge or competence
- To judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with a view to adjusting/improving curricula, standards, teaching/learning materials and assessment instruments/procedures.

Even when this document – the National Protocol - is replaced by another policy document, the definition, and much of what it says about assessment will still be valid because there is general agreement amongst academics and educators about what assessment is. Much of what the document says about the way in which assessment should be conducted in general will also remain the same because policy documents are typically informed by academic consensus, factual evidence, good practice and experiential wisdom. What might change are the emphasis on and/or detail of particular practices.

 If educators and systems managers are to use assessment for all these purposes, they need to be very clear about what outcomes-based assessment is. Do they really know what the term means? Do they know how, when and what should one assess and how one integrates assessment into teaching and learning? Do they know when assessment stops and evaluation kicks in? Do they know how to ensure that assessments are valid, fair, and sufficient?

Unit 3 learning outcomes and assessment criteria

This unit is aimed at refreshing your memory as regards the management of outcomes-based education, with specific reference to coordinating outcomes-based assessment. At the end of the unit you should have a critical understanding of OBA principles and their application in educational institutions. In order to demonstrate your competence you have to provide evidence that you can:

- Distinguish outcomes-based assessment from other forms of assessment
- Determine whether or not assessment instruments are appropriate to the assessment purpose and/or focus
- Draw up plans for assessment at different institutional levels
- Select and use a range of learner-centred assessment instruments
- Prepare learners and other stakeholders for assessments
- Design and use rubrics to interpret assessment evidence.

3.2 Outcomes–based assessment

Before we start interrogating the concept, 'outcomes-based assessment', go back to Unit 1 where we discussed the notions 'outcomes', 'based' and 'outcomes-based education'. Study your explanations and our comments – memorize these if you wish – to ensure that you know exactly what each term means before you continue with this module.

Also, refer to the Reader, *Assessment in Outcomes-based Education*, which you received when you did the fundamental module on *Portfolio Development.* Make short notes to help you remember the core characteristics of outcomes-based assessment – or highlight them if you wish – while you are studying this reader.

Finally, should you wish to do so, read more widely on outcomes-based education and/or outcomes-based assessment, using the reference list at the back of this module as a guide.

our comments

Outcomes-based assessment, just like outcomes-based lesson planning, outcomes-based teaching and learning, and outcomes-based materials development must take place in terms of Spady's four operational OBE principles, namely **clarity of focus, high expectations, design down***, and* **expanded opportunities***.*
Remember that **operational** *principles are not concerned with assumptions or theories; they are concerned with action. In other words they are the 'rules' that should govern all outcomes-based actions, decisions, structures and processes. This includes assessment (see Table 4).*

TABLE 12: OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLE	THIS MEANS THAT:	PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS
Clarity of focus	The assessment purpose, focus, procedures and target group should be clear to all concerned.	Teachers/assessors should know exactly which group is being targeted for assessment.
		Teachers/assessors and learners should know why they are being assessed, which knowledge/skills will be assessed, how this will be done, by whom, when and where
		Learners should also know what criteria will be used to determine competence and what avenues will be available to them should they wish to appeal against assessment decisions

OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLE	THIS MEANS THAT:	PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS
Design down	The design of assessment and evaluation instruments should start with the identification of the outcomes that guide the collection of evidence and/or the standards against which learner performance will be judged.	The outcome/s and/or assessment standard/s that are the focus of the particular assessment task should be used as starting point for the design of assessment instruments.
		Assessment instruments should be appropriate to the assessment purpose and target group.
		Evaluation criteria should be designed down from the standards against which learner performance will be assessed.
High expectations	The standards against which performance will be judged are the same for all learners irrespective of individual differences/needs.	Teachers/assessors should assess all learners in the target group against the same outcome/s and/or assessment standards.
		Criteria used to judge learner performance against the assessment standards should help assessors to distinguish between performances that are average, below or above average.
Expanded opportunity	The instruments/methods used to collect evidence of learner competence and/or the timing of assessments must take cognizance of individual learner needs and/or differences. For additional guidelines on what this might mean, you should refer to the policy on Inclusivity.	Assessment instruments should be designed in such a way that they accommodate different learning styles and/or needs.
		Provision should be made to assess learners at different times – when they are ready to be assessed
		Learners should have more than one chance to demonstrate their competence in a particular area
		Learners who struggle to meet the standards must receive remedial support before they try again.

stop & think !

Having studied the table, think back to the assessment practices that were prevalent at the time you were at school and compare the demands they set with the demands of assessment in an outcomes-based system. Which of the two do you think requires more effort and/or better management? Why do you think so? Do you think that assessment practices in schools have in fact changed since the implementation of OBE? If so, how has it changed; if not, why has nothing

changed? Have your *own* assessment practices changed at all? If not, what do you plan to do about it?

For more information on the practical implementation of assessment principles, refer to your Reader, **Text 3**.

our comments

*Note that the **expanded opportunity principle** does not only relate to the accommodation of individual learning style and/or tempo but also to the creation of opportunities that break down barriers to learning, thereby promoting inclusive education.*

In this regard it is important to ensure that learners with special needs and/or who are likely to experience barriers to learning and development are identified early and provided with learning support. While the learning outcomes and assessment standards are the same for all learners, also those with special needs and/or barriers, the ways in which evidence of their knowledge and/or ability is collected need not be similar to the ways used for mainstream learners. Blind learners may, for example be allowed to use Braille or special computers to 'write'; learners who write slowly or who have a spelling or writing problem could be given extra time, etc.

*Ideally, **barriers to learning and development** should have been identified in the early childhood development phase (0-5 years) by parents, professionals in the health sector, community-based and school clinics. Specialist education support personnel should also be called upon to support educators when specialised assessment procedures are required to identify learning difficulties. Educators, while utilising the services of professionals in other sectors, should, however, also accept responsibility for the identification of learners in their care who exhibit barriers to learning and development.*

activity 3a

time allocation

± 20 min

Bearing in mind everything that you have learnt about assessment so far, critically read the dialogue that follows and determine whether or not these two teachers really understand what outcomes-based assessment is all about. If not, what is it that you think they do not yet understand?

Dialogue

(Staff room. Break.)

SIBONGILE: (sighing and looking very depressed): Eish!. I am really worried. I spend hours preparing my lessons, go all out in teaching them and give the children homework every day. Then I give them a test and they all fail. What do you think I'm doing wrong?

THABO: (looking up from the book he was reading): Why should something be wrong with you? Perhaps the children just didn't learn!

SIBONGILE: (still looking very despondent): Ja, I also thought so at first. But this

can't be the reason every time. There must be something else wrong.

THABO: (returning to his book): Well, then blame OBE. That's what I do. Everybody does, why shouldn't we?

SIBONGILE: Hau! I can't do that. I like OBE but perhaps I'm implementing it in the wrong way.

THABO: (still reading but listening with one ear): What do you mean when you say 'in the wrong way'?

SIBONGILE: I mean, do we really understand what 'outcomes-based assessment is' and how to implement it?

THABO: (pointing to his book): In the first place, S, this book I'm reading says one doesn't 'implement' assessment; one 'conducts' it. It also says there's no such thing as outcomes-based assessment. It's a term used only in South Africa, nowhere else in the world.

SIBONGILE: Serious?

THABO: Serious! I mean, if you read the word, 'outcome' the wrong way round, it says 'come out'. This would mean that we should assess what 'comes out'. How can we do that in a classroom?

SIBONGILE: Perhaps it's like when you go to a bank auto-teller. You put your card in the machine, expecting money to come out. Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. Maybe it's the same with teaching – you don't always get what you expect!

THABO: What who expects - the teacher, the learner or the department?

SIBONGILE: How should I know? The teacher, I imagine. What I do know is that I doubt the quality of my input, my teaching ability, every time I mark a test or an assignment. Learner performance is always below my expectations.

THABO: Perhaps you're right! Just as no money can come out of the auto teller unless some money has come into it, we cannot expect learners to do well unless we have taught them well.

SIBONGILE: Also, unless they know what our expectations are, they will not be able to live up to them, right?

THABO: Right.

SIBONGILE: Does that mean we should give them the test papers or the test questions beforehand, so that they can know what we are going to ask?

THABO: No ways! That's so transparent it smells of corruption! What we should do is spell out what it is we expect them to demonstrate in the test.

SIBONGILE: You mean like knowledge, skills, attitudes and values?

THABO: Something like that. The NCS already provides us with outcome statements that specify what learners should know and be able to do at the end of each grade.

SIBONGILE: Yes, and no. The outcome statements are not grade specific. They are the same for all grades so one can't use them for assessment

purposes. They are like the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. You are always striving to get there but there is no guarantee that you will!

THABO: What about the assessment standards? Can't one use them as outcomes?

SIBONGILE: Again, yes and no! They are like mini outcomes that, together, make up a learning outcome. Because they are grade specific they also serve as indicators of what learners should know and be able to do at the end of a specific grade if, and only if, the input - teaching and learning - has been up to standard.

THABO: Now I'm really confused! If learners must demonstrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values described in the outcomes, at the grade level indicated in the assessment standards, should we not be talking about standards-based assessment rather than outcomes-based assessment?

SIBONGILE: I never thought of it that way but I think you're right! We aren't really assessing the outcomes; we're assessing the standards.

THABO: Are you sure? Are we not assessing against the standards, rather than the standards themselves?

SIBONGILE: You're right! The standards simply indicate what is regarded as sufficient learning for a particular grade. Every child whose performance is 'up to standard' should, therefore, pass!

THABO: That makes perfect sense but something still bothers me.

SIBONGILE: What?

THABO: If we are assessing a learner's performance against a specific standard, and if her/his performance against this standard determines whether or not s/he may move on to more complex work or to another grade, are we not using criterion-referencing?

SIBONGILE: Sounds like it, which would mean that assessment in an outcomes-based system must be criterion-referenced.

THABO: Which means, to answer your very first question, that learners may be performing badly in your tests because they are not aware of the criteria and/or standards that you use when marking their tests.

SIBONGILE: Which means that I must be transparent about my expectations, in terms of assessment standards, before the test and that I should assess each learner's performance against those standards. Thank you T – you're a marvel!

THABO: I know! Can I now get back to my book?

According to us, Sibongile and Thabo are on the right track but there are still some gaps in their understanding. While there are similarities between standards-based, outcomes-based and criterion-referenced assessment they are not exactly the same.

As you would know from the NCS, the learning outcomes for a specific subject or learning area are the same for all grades while the assessment standards differ.

Learning outcomes are, therefore, not the same as assessment standards and, consequently, outcomes-based assessment is not necessarily the same as standards-based assessment.

- Learning Outcomes describe culminating competences, to use Spady's words, i.e. the competences that learners must demonstrate when they are eligible to be awarded a qualification – the GETC at the end of Grade 9; the FETC at the end of Grade 12, and various other qualifications awarded by Further and Higher Education Institutions and/or assessment agencies.

- Assessment Standards, on the other hand, describe the scope and complexity of learning that someone must master at different levels of the education system in order to be deemed 'competent'. Assessment Standards can, therefore, be used to monitor learner progress, diagnose learning problems and/or determine whether or not a learner has satisfied the standards set for a particular grade. If s/he has, s/he will be promoted to the next grade; if not, s/he may be required to 'relearn' those aspects not yet mastered.

Outcomes-based and standards-based assessment processes are, however, very similar since the assessment instruments used to collect information are designed around the outcomes/standards, with assessors first choosing the outcome/standards to be assessed and then designing the instrument. This is not the case in content-based assessment, where the content is selected first, and the criteria developed only after the instrument has been designed.

In the South African schooling context, assessment is both outcomes- and standards-based: assessment standards (short/medium term aims/goals/objectives) are used to monitor progress towards the achievement of learning outcomes (long-term goals/aims).

*Outcomes and standards are typically used in the design of instruments that will be used to collect evidence; **criteria** are used in the **interpretation** and **evaluation** of the collected evidence.*

*Note that we talk of criterion-referenced rather than criterion-based assessment. The criteria that will be used to make judgements do not have to be determined before the assessment task is designed: they could be 'pasted' on to the task afterwards. An assessor could, for example, ask learners to write an essay in which they have to argue for or against claims that six million Jews were never exterminated by the Nazis, as is claimed in history. Only after she has designed the task will she consider what criteria s/he should use in marking it. In this case the criteria are chosen to demonstrate that learners know and understand the content and can do the task set. In other words, the criteria are **content-** and/or **task-based.***

Contrary to popular belief, criterion-referenced assessment is not a spin-off of outcomes-based education: it was around long before people started talking of OBE. Nevertheless, outcomes-based assessment is always criterion-referenced because what learners have to do in an assessment task in order to convince the assessor of his/her competence, and the criteria that will be used to judge his/her competence should be provided in the assessment instrument.

3.2.1   Collecting outcomes–based evidence

One of the maxims of OBE that all assessors should remember is:

ASSESS HOW AND WHAT YOU TEACH.

In other words, what you *teach* and the way in which you teach it and learners *learn* it, must reflect *what* you plan to assess and *the way* in which you plan to assess it. If, for example, you want to assess learners' ability to solve problems, you should have taught them how to solve problems and you should have created opportunities for them to practice solving problems **before** you assess their problem-solving ability and your teaching and learning materials should have created opportunities for them to do so!

This is what we mean when we say that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Remember that outcomes-based assessment must be integrated into the teaching and learning process **from the start.** In other words, assessment, teaching and learning must be planned simultaneously (see Figure 12).
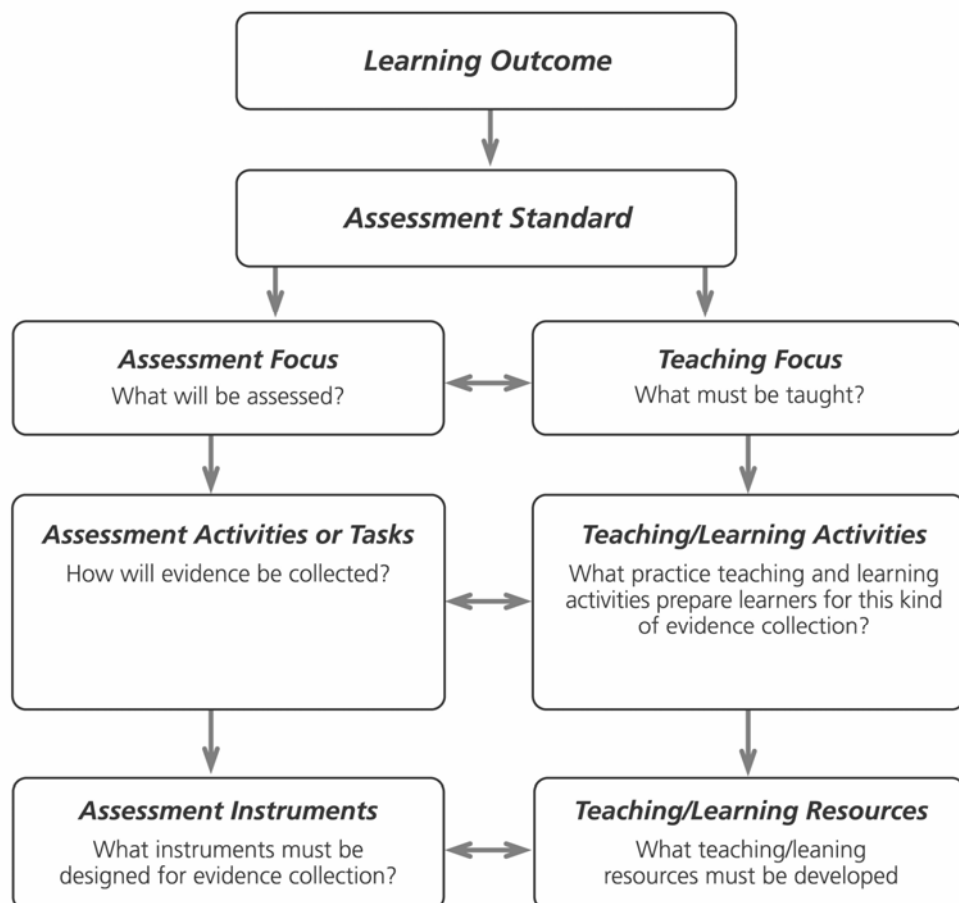
Figure 12: Integrated teaching, learning and assessment

You might, having studied Figure 12, assumed that assessment and its integration into teaching and learning is a linear process, with a clear beginning and end. This is not, however, the case. Remember that assessment results also have to be 'fed back' into subsequent planning and delivery of lessons and assessments.

The SAQA Guidelines on assessment as well as the various assessment policies we have already referred to indicate quite clearly that assessment results must provide information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with a view to improving them in future and must, therefore, be used as basis for the evaluation and review of learning programmes, lessons and assessment instruments (see Figure 13).

PLAN → TEACH → TEST → SELECT (PASS/FAIL)

PLAN — WHAT DO I WANT TO ACHIEVE?

TEACH — WHAT WILL I DO IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS PURPOSE?

ASSESS — HOW WILL I KNOW I HAVE ACHIEVED MY PURPOSE?

ANALYSE — WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT MY TEACHING?

REPLAN — WHAT DO I WANT TO DO DIFFERENTLY?

RETEACH — WHAT WILL I DO THIS TIME TO IMPROVE LEARNING?

RE-ANALYSE

PLAN AGAIN

TEACH AGAIN
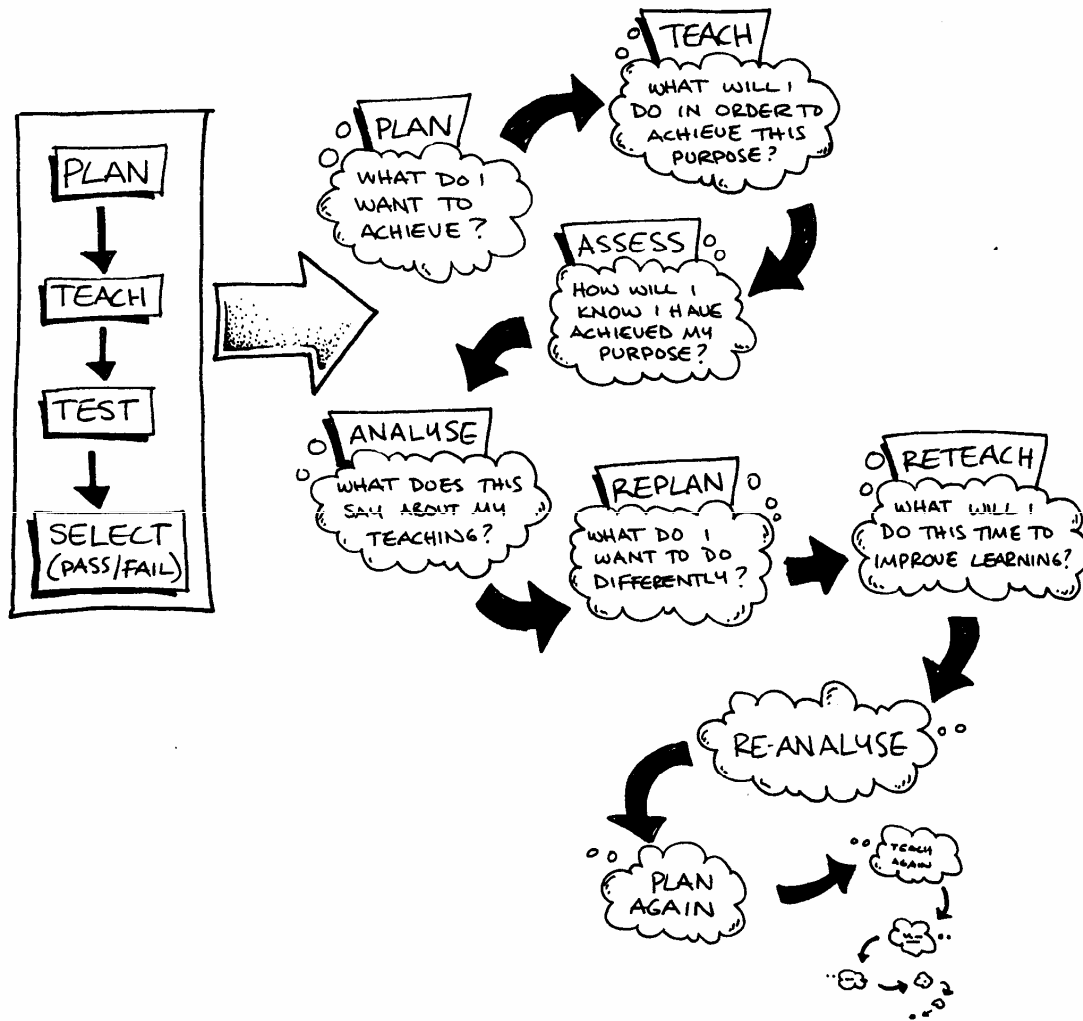
Figure 13: Feedback loop (Criticos et al. 2002:30)

Let's illustrate how this integrated planning process works by using an example from the *Social Sciences* Learning Area.

Example
The learning outcome selected is Learning Outcome 2, which reads,
'The learner will be able to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding'.
The first thing that we notice in this outcome is that it focuses on *knowledge* and *understanding*, that is, on *cognitive* rather than on *practical* skills. Because assessment tasks must be based on the knowledge, skills and/or understandings described in the outcomes, assessment tasks must be set in such a way that they will enable learners to demonstrate how much they *know* of and how well they *understand* the topic being assessed – the *French Revolution*, for example.

Contrary to popular belief, *knowledge* and *understanding* are not the same. According to Benjamin Bloom, the creator of *Bloom's Taxonomy* (see Reader, **Text 4**), knowledge is evidence when someone can *identify*, *name, match* or *define* something. Understanding, on the other hand, can only be determined if a person is able to *translate/explain* something in his/her *own* words.

The Grade 9 Assessment Standards associated with this Learning Outcome require learners to demonstrate that they are able to:

- Place events, people and changes in the periods of history studied within a chronological framework [chronology and time]
- Identify categories of causes and effects (e.g. immediate and long-term, direct and indirect)[cause and effect]
- Explain and analyze the reasons for and results of events in history [cause and effect]
- Recognize that change and development does not always mean progress [change and continuity].

Looking at the Assessment Standards associated with this outcome, it would seem as if, in terms of *Bloom's Taxonomy,* the *first two* in the list focus on the lower level cognitive abilities, *knowledge* and *understanding*, whereas Assessment Standards 3 and 4 focus on both lower (*understanding*) *and* higher (*analytic*) cognitive ability. (Refer to the Table in your **Text 4** for help: it describes each level of *Bloom's Taxonomy* in some detail.)

The assessor, in collecting evidence of learner performance in terms of this outcome should use an assessment instrument/strategy that would assess *all* the cognitive skills indicated in the assessment standards. The instrument could, for example, assess learners':

- *Knowledge* by asking them to *match* the names of historical figures with historical events and/or to *list* the causes and/or effects of particular historical event
- *Understanding* by asking them to *describe or explain* what caused a particular historical event, like World War 2
- *Analytic ability* by asking them to *critically discuss* the impact that different historical events had on a particular group of people, for example the impact the Industrial Revolution on the farming community or apartheid on specific racial groups in South Africa
- *Ability to synthesize* by asking them to write a paragraph or essay in which they *argue* for or against democracy, *with reference to* historical events.

Did you notice how each aspect of assessment, from the focus of the task to the development of the instrument to the type of answer expected of learners, is influenced by the selected outcome and/or assessment standard? *This* is *outcomes-based* assessment.

Having planned the assessment, the teacher must now use it as a basis for lesson planning, i.e. she must use the knowledge and skills s/he plans to assess and the way in which s/he plans to do so as the basis for the selection of knowledge, teaching and learning activities. Let's say, for example, that the teacher plans to ask learners to:

- List the causes of the French Revolution. Therefore she must not only present them with information (knowledge) on the French Revolution but she must also teach them how to make lists (a practical skill) and how to identify causes (a cognitive skill). The activities that she designs for learners – to do individually, in pairs or in groups, must therefore require them to make lists and to identify causes.
- Write a paragraph or an essay in which they argue for democracy with reference to historical events. Therefore learners need to know what democracy is (knowledge) but also how to determine whether or not particular countries were democratic in the past (analysis and evaluation), how to identify the effect of their democratic status on the people (analysis) and how to construct an argument (practical/communication skill) on the basis of this historical knowledge and understanding. Learners would, therefore have to practise, alone or in groups, how to identify all kinds of causes and how to construct all kinds of arguments so that they will be able to do these things during assessment. The teacher will, therefore, have to find or design activities that will create opportunities for learners to do so.

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activity 3b

time allocation ± 2–3 hours

Refer to the practical examples and guidelines for OBA given in **Text 5** of your **Reader**.
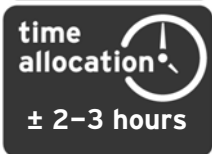
Now using these examples as a guide, evaluate the assessment practices of one or more teachers whom you manage.

What additional resources and training do you think these teachers may need? How will you make this available?

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our comments

The previous activity was designed to help you reflect on the implications of your role as an education leader and manager. Not only do you need to be able to set a good example yourself, but you also need to be able to identify the developmental needs and support of your staff and make sure that these are addressed. This could mean something as simple as making sure that the appropriate guidelines and documents are available, through to scheduling times for formal meetings to reflect on implementation and progress and to effect internal staff development through to more formal and extended staff development programmes.

All of this requires planning and needs to be informed by a school assessment policy and plan. This is the focus of the next part of this unit.

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activity 3b

time allocation ± 40 min

Bearing in mind what you have learnt about assessment – both in your reading and through personal experience – write down as many assessment purposes as you can think of in Column 1 of Table 13 and indicate next to these – in Column 2 - what evidence you should collect in terms of each purpose.
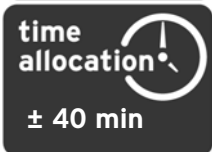
Having done this, match the assessment purpose and focus in each row with appropriate assessment instruments – chosen from the list provided after the table.

To help you with this activity we have completed one row of the table

TABLE 13: PURPOSEFUL ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE (Why is evidence being collected?)	ASSESSMENT FOCUS (What kind of evidence will be collected?)	ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT (How will evidence be collected?)	ASSESSMENT VENUE (Where is evidence collected?)	TIMING (When is evidence collected?)	ASSESSOR (Who collects the evidence?)
For diagnostic purposes	*Evidence of learners' understanding of the LOLT*	*Cloze procedure test in LOLT*	*In the classroom*	*At the beginning of the year*	*The teacher*

3.2.2   Assessment forms

Please note that the assessment forms listed and discussed here, are by no means definitive or exhaustive. They are simply meant to give you some idea of the kind of assessment forms that *could* be used in assessing school performance.

- ***Multiple-choice tests*** are perceived as objective tests that are best used to assess learners' knowledge and understanding but also their ability to analyse and to apply knowledge and understanding in solving problems and/or arriving at the correct answer.
- ***True and False tests*** are primarily used to assess learners' knowledge and understanding. True and false items could, however, also be used to assess learners' thinking ability and/or their attitudes. In these instances they would

consist of a short text in which someone argues for or against something and the learners has to indicate whether or not the argument is sound and/or where someone's behaviour is described and learners have to indicate whether or not the behaviour is acceptable/appropriate. The danger of learners simply guessing the answer in such tests is limited by asking them to give a reason for their choice in each case.

- **Mix and match tests** assess learners' knowledge and understanding only. The tests consist of two columns of words, phrases, or statements. The statements in the right hand column are usually muddled or mixed up. Learners are required to find a word, phrase or statement in the right hand column that matches each item in the left hand column.

- **Cloze procedure tests** are texts from which certain words, phrases or clauses have been left out and learners are required to 'fill in the blanks'. In order to construct a cloze test, teachers/assessors take a text (from a textbook or a set of notes) and rewrite this, leaving blanks where learners have to fill in the answers. In content subjects such tests do little more than assess learners' knowledge, i.e. what they have learnt or memorized and can remember. For each gap there is usually only one correct answer. In languages they are used to assess learners' knowledge and understanding of language usage. In this case there is seldom only one correct answer. The only criterion is that the learners' answers must demonstrate that they understand how language works and the text must make sense when all the words have been filled in.

- In an **open question** test there is usually more than one possible/correct answer; in a **closed question** test there is only one correct answer for each question. An example of a closed question could be something like: 'Who is the current president of South Africa?' An example of an open question could be something like 'How would you go about finding money to start your own small business?' You will note that closed questions are aimed at assessing learners' knowledge while open questions are aimed at assessing their understanding and their ability to apply analyze and to solve problems. Open questions are, therefore, more demanding both for learners and for teachers. Teachers must be very careful when marking open questions that they do not mark them subjectively but assess their worth/quality against objective criteria and/or standards.

- **Essay type questions** are probably the most demanding types of paper and pencil tests because they assess learners' ability across the whole of Bloom's Taxonomy. Essays are aimed at assessing learners' ability to synthesize (create their own texts), but, in order to do so, learners have to know, understand and be able to apply what they have learnt in order to create this text. In argumentative essays they also have to demonstrate their ability to think critically and logically.
Essay questions must be formulated very carefully to ensure that they do not lead learners to a specific answer while, at the same, time give them enough information to ensure that they do not misunderstand the question. It is always a good idea when giving essay questions to go through the following steps: Formulate the questions; Compile a checklist or rubric that you will use to assess learners' answers (without giving away the answers), and include the criteria in the test paper so that learners will know exactly what you will focus on while you are marking their essays.

- In **performance assessments** learners are assessed while they are demonstrating or doing something – singing, cooking, debating, setting up an experiment, etc. Assessors, observing the performance, could make a holistic judgment of learner competence based on the performance itself and/or the thinking informing the performance or they could use a checklist/rubric against which the performance is assessed. Assessors could even conduct interviews with learners after the performance to find out why they did what they did in the way they did. In outcomes-based assessments these checklists/rubrics should be given to learners prior to the assessment event so that they can prepare their performance in terms of the stipulated criteria. The primary purpose in performance assessments is to determine whether or not learners have mastered specific skills and there are many opportunities for school learners to demonstrate their skills by means of performance assessments. Examples include learners preparing meals or baking cakes in Home Economics, setting up experiments in Physical Science, doing 'practical' work in Biology, taking part in debates in languages, playing a musical instrument in Arts and Culture, doing different exercises in gymnastics, and so forth. If you let your mind go you will be able to think of many other instances where performance assessment would be most appropriate and not too difficult to manage, provided that you have the necessary infrastructure and personnel to conduct the assessments and ensure the safety of the learners.

  As is the case with any other assessment, performance assessments must be aimed at assessing learner competence against a specific standard and/or set of assessment criteria. In designing performance assessments, teachers/assessors should, therefore, first decide what knowledge, skills, attitude, value (as formulated in critical and/or specific outcomes) they want to assess and then design the performance assessment around these outcomes. Learners must then be provided with an instruction sheet that tells them what competence they will have to demonstrate; what criteria will be used to assess them, and what options they have regarding the way in which they want to 'demonstrate' their competence. They should also be told when and where the assessment will take place and who the assessors should be.

  Performance assessment is hardly new. Teachers base most of their judgments of learner achievement on day-to-day observation of learners in action in the classroom. What is new is the concerted effort by many educationists to afford performance assessments a more central role in formal assessments. Many challenges – from the technical to the practical – accompany performance assessment, especially when assessments are used for large-scale high stakes purposes such as school graduation.

- **Portfolio assessment** was traditionally associated with the assessment of artists and models, who would compile portfolios that include examples or photos of the kind of work they had done up to that time. Portfolios as a means of assessing school learning could be used to illustrate learners' best efforts or their progress towards satisfying assessment standards. Work included in portfolios should reflect competence in cognitive processes, affective responses and a range of skills related to the specific subject or learning area. Portfolios are very useful to parents, teachers and counselors because they help with the identification of learners' strengths and weaknesses and indicate where extra help or tuition may be needed.

They also allow a teacher to evaluate his/her teaching effectiveness and, therefore, help him/her with future planning.

Portfolios should not be compiled by teachers but by learners themselves because, in selecting and organising the kind of work that they want assessors to judge, they are accepting some responsibility for their own learning/work and learning to accept the consequences of their choices. If, for example, they do not include sufficient evidence (enough examples) of their work the assessor cannot make a fair judgment of what they are worth and they will have to live with the consequences.

Note:

Remember that this module is not aimed at teaching you how to design assessment instruments, only how to select and/or use them. *Designing assessment instruments* is a topic that is addressed in a number of other modules in this course. You are urged also to read the *National Assessment Protocol* and the *Assessment Guidelines* in the various *NCS* documents, all of which will give you a better understanding of what is required of you in this regard. We have also included in your reader a list of additional readings should you wish to deepen and/or expand your knowledge and understanding of assessment in an outcomes-based teaching and learning paradigm.

3.2.3   Planning to collect outcomes−based evidence

Most of this unit thus far has been devoted to a discussion of the assessment purpose and the alignment of assessment instruments to this purpose. It is important to remember, though, that the *purpose* of assessment determines not only *what* we assess but also *how, when, how often* and *where* assessments take place. While you may not have considered this fact, we would argue that choices regarding these aspects could, and often do, have an impact on the quality – validity, reliability and fairness – of assessments and assessment results.

3.3 Assessment venue

Traditionally, most assessments in educational institutions were in the form of *paper and pencil* tests and examinations. Because of this, assessment commonly took place in a classroom or examination hall where all learners sat down at desks and answered, in writing, the test or examination paper. Even then there were, however, also instances where learners were required to do '*practical'* examinations. In cases where learners had to 'produce' something (like a garment, a model, a painting, etc.) the assessment task could be done at the learner's home, in a domestic science or woodwork centre, in the arts classroom, etc.

Performance assessments (e.g. when a *trainee* pilot has to demonstrate his ability to fly an airplane without danger to real passengers), assessments would take place in venues with special equipment so that learners/trainees to demonstrate their skills by means of simulations, i.e. they would be required to manipulate controls without being in a 'real' airplane. Trainee nurses, on the other hand, would have to care for real patients but under the supervision of a qualified nurse or matron who could ensure that patients would not be harmed. Medical students doing their 'hospital year' would accompany qualified doctors on their rounds and would have to 'diagnose' patients on the basis of information provided to them by the doctor. In an authentic workplace environment, assessment would take place in the workplace itself, while the worker/employee is carrying out his/her daily duties. Principals and Heads of Departments at schools typically assess the performance of teachers and/or teaching assistants in this way.

What is clear from this description is that the *venue* where assessment is to take place is determined both by the purpose of the assessment and the type of assessment that is going to take place. An assessor, therefore, first has to decide what he wants to assess and how he plans to collect the evidence before s/he can decide where the assessment is going to take place. Once s/he has decided on all of these aspects, s/he also has to determine what resources and/or equipment are required in order to conduct the type of assessment s/he has in mind.

For example, if the assessment requires simulations, the assessor will have to ensure that the equipment required for simulated activity to take place is available and in good order otherwise the assessment results may not be regarded as reliable.

Note that, in school contexts, it is the school principal or the school management team that is responsible for arranging and preparing assessment venues. It is important, therefore, for the assessor to inform the responsible managers and/or administrators tasked with this function of any special needs in terms of the assessment venue.

stop & think !

One usually thinks that organising a venue for assessment is as simple as sweeping a classroom and arranging desks in it. With the mainstreaming of learners with special needs it is no longer that simple.

Stop for a moment and think of the implications the inclusion of learners with special needs has for the organisation of an assessment venue. What special arrangements will you, as a manager, have to make for learners who are blind, deaf, or in a wheelchair? Would you, for example, have to organise special computers for blind children to use in 'writing' their examination papers? What cost implications are associated with such arrangements? How could you involve the broader school community in addressing problems like these?

3.4 Timing of assessments

This is an important question and one that needs to be considered very carefully. Traditionally all learners were assessed at the same time – usually at the end of the year – and in the same way – usually by means of a written examination. Currently there is a much greater awareness of the need to accommodate the special needs of learners, not only in the teaching and learning situation but also in terms of assessment. We shall talk more about this later when we discuss the accommodation of special needs.

Remember our earlier comment that assessment should support learning and development. It should, therefore, be an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Remember that we also said assessment could serve various purposes. Both these comments have a bearing on when assessments could or should take place.

The most basic decision to make when deciding when evidence should be collected is whether it should happen before *(pre-tests),* during *(continuous assessment)* or after learning (*post-tests*). Once again, this is determined by the purpose of the assessment.

If, for example, assessment is aimed at determining whether or not a person has the *potential* to successfully complete a specific course or perform a specific job, the assessment will take place prior to (before) the placement.

This kind of assessment, which takes place prior to learning or prior to placement, is called *initial assessment* and is crucial in the recognition of prior learning (RPL), an important element of the South African education and training system. If initial assessment is part of a systemic evaluation process and is aimed at analyzing existing circumstances, infrastructure, knowledge and/or competence it is called baseline assessment, something with which all of you are familiar.

If the purpose of assessment is to *monitor* a learner's progress, assessment will take place *continuously*. Continuous assessment is usually formative in nature and helps teachers keep track of learners' progress towards specific outcomes or achievements and/or to get feedback about the success of their teaching methods and/or learning support materials. It can, however, also be used for diagnostic purposes – identifying a person's weaknesses, strengths or interests and/or

If the purpose is to determine the *'sum total'* of a person's knowledge, ability, understanding or competence assessment takes place at the end of a learning experience, i.e. at the end of a lesson, theme, term, year of course.

In outcomes-based education the timing of assessments is somewhat more complicated since one of its key principles is that learners must only be assessed when they are *ready for assessment* and, since not all learners learn at the same pace/tempo, assessment must be staggered.

This is very difficult to do in a school situation but with good planning it might well be possible, especially at a micro or classroom level.

What is important, though, is that learners must know well in advance of the assessment when it is going to take place so that they will have enough time to prepare or study for it. According to the *National Protocol on Assessment,* learners and their parents must be provided with the dates of all assessments during the first week of the school year. By implication the school must have an assessment plan in which these dates are indicated. Not only will this ensure that learners will have sufficient time to study but it will also give educators the opportunity of staggering assessments in such a way that they evenly spread out over the year. No learner should, therefore, have to write three or four tests on one day, not even during examinations. To ensure that this happens the school principal and his/her management team should, together with the teachers, draw up an assessment schedule at the beginning of the year and make this available to all parties concerned as soon as possible.

stop & think !

Think creatively about the timing of assessments. Could you, as a school manager, design an assessment plan that would enable teachers to use assessment in diagnostic, formative and summative ways without making assessment the driving force behind teaching and learning? If so, what would your plan look like?

3.5 Frequency of assessments

Assessment evidence is regarded as ***sufficient*** when enough evidence has been collected to make valid and reliable judgements about a learner's competence. In other words, no learner's knowledge, ability or competence should be judged on the basis of a single assessment event. Rather, learners must be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do and, in terms of the principles of transformational outcomes-based education, failures should not count against them. By implication, judgements of learner competence should be based on their best performance rather than on an average mark of all performances during a learning experience, especially since not all learners master things equally fast. A slow learner would then, in fact be judged less competent, not because he does not know or cannot do what he is expected to but because he took a while before he mastered the knowledge/skills required.

To ensure that sufficient evidence of learner progress and/or achievement is collected during a single school year, the minimum number of assessments that should be conducted each year in each phase is specified in the *National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R-12)*(DoE, 21 October 2005). For your convenience these specifications have been replicated in your reader as Tables 8 to 11. Given that the Protocol is in the process of being replaced by another policy, these specifications should not be regarded as cast in stone; rather, use them as an indication of the kind of planning that should take place in educational institutions as regards assessment.

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stop & think !

Bloom, in designing his mastery learning approach, argued that it is not ability but time on task that determines learner success or failure. Based on this assumption, he did not compel teachers to assess all learners at the same time. Rather, he suggested that teachers placed learners in different 'mastery groups' based on their progress and that the different groups could be assessed at different times, i.e. when the learners were ready to be assessed.

Do you think that a system like this could work in your school? Why/why not? If not, could you think of another way that would give 'slower learners' enough time to master the required learning content without holding other learners back or disrupting the learning process and/or the management of assessment at school level in any way?

The standard of assessment and the ways in which assessment evidence is collected, interpreted and disseminated to interested parties – learners, parents, departmental officials, etc. – are important indicators of the extent to which a school is achieving not only its own aims and goals but also the extent to which it is contributing to the transformation of education and the country as a whole. For example:
- How does assessment in your school accommodate special learning needs such as language, culture, physical and/or mental challenges?
- How are your school's assessment results used as basis for the

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improvement or teaching, learning, assessment, parental involvement, etc.?

- What procedures are in place at your school for learners and parents to appeal against assessment procedures and/or results?
- How many educators in your school are trained, registered and/or accredited as assessors?
- Do you ever have assessment 'debriefing' sessions in your school where educators can discuss problems experienced in the collection, interpretation, recording and/or reporting of assessment results?

The *National Protocol on Assessment for Schools in the General and Further Education and Training Band (Grades R-12)* (DoE, 21 October 2005) , and the related addenda of 2006, specifies the minimum number of formal assessments that should take place in each grade. What are your thoughts on this issue? Should the minimum number be specified and if so, how many assessments should take place in each grade during each term? What should the mix of assessments be (assignments, projects, tests, examinations, etc)? How could this mix ensure that assessments are sufficient, reliable and valid without overburdening educators and learners with formal assessments and/or using up valuable teaching time?

3.6 Selection of assessors

According to SAQA no one who is not a registered assessor should be allowed to conduct assessments.

In order to be registered as an assessor, a person will have to demonstrate that s/he can plan and conduct assessments, which is what this module is aimed at. You should, therefore, on completion of this module, be able to apply for registration as an assessor. You can look up the website of the Education Training and Development SETA for details on the process to follow.

In terms of school education, however, teachers are still primarily responsible for the design of assessment instruments and for collecting evidence of learner progress and/or achievement. In the past, they were the only ones who did so. However, current views on assessment encourage the use of multiple assessors – teachers, learners themselves and parents, for example – and/or assessment teams. In terms of this view educators, learners, parents and education support services (ESS) – such as occupational and speech therapists and educational psychologists – should work together to collect evidence, not only of learner achievements and progress but also of their needs, problems, strengths and weaknesses. This cooperation places yet another responsibility on the shoulders of school leaders: ultimately it is the principal and his/her management team that will have to ensure that the requisite networks are established and that they operate effectively and efficiently.

Any one of these 'partners', including learners, could, however, accept sole responsibility for the collection and/or interpretation of evidence. Learners could, for example, keep track of their own or their peers' progress towards and/or performance in terms of a specific learning outcome or assessment standard. Self-assessment encourages reflection and responsibility because they will be able to identify their own and others' weaknesses and, if necessary, take steps to address these before it is too late. There is, of course, the danger that, in assessing themselves, learners' subjective views of their own and their peers' abilities could cloud their judgment or encourage dishonesty. Research has shown, however, that the longer they engage in these practices the better, stricter and more honest they become.

A common mistake that teachers often make in designing self and peer evaluation sheets is that these focus on attitudes and the extent to which learners were involved in activities. While these aspects have their place in assessment they cannot and should not be used to replace solid criteria that describe learning and/or development. Self and peer evaluation sheets should be just as stringent as those used by teachers and/or other assessors otherwise there will be a disjuncture between the grades allocated.

Consult the minimum specifications regarding formal, recorded assessment in the National Protocol and then, bearing in mind these as well as everything you have learnt about assessment thus far, draw up an assessment plan for the second term of the year in respect of:

- A group of teachers in your school who all teach either the same grade or the same subject/learning area

- OR

- Formal assessments for all the learners in your school, with indications of the grades and subjects/learning areas involved.

Your assessment plan could be in the form of a table or a written discourse with sub-heading but it should include information on all of the following:
- The Learning Outcome and Assessment Standards or, in the case of teacher appraisal, the role performance and performance indicators, that will be used to direct assessment
- The kind of evidence that will be collected, the instrument/strategy that will be used to do so and the procedures you will put in place to ensure that the assessments are valid, reliable and fair
- The person/s responsible for designing, moderating, duplicating and storing assessment instruments
- The number of assessments you plan to conduct, the dates on which evidence will be collected, the venues where assessment will be conducted and the date/s on which marking must be completed
- Mechanisms/procedures that you will use to accommodate special needs and/or learning barriers
- The way in which you plan to record the assessment results and to provide learners and parents with feedback
- Any costs involved in conducting the assessment, e.g. copying tests/exam papers, paying additional invigilators, etc.

Having completed your plan, ask one or more of your colleagues to evaluate it in terms of appropriateness, sufficiency and feasibility and/or call a meeting of concerned parties, asking for their critical inputs.
File your plan as well as your colleagues' comments and/or recommendations and/or the minutes of the meeting in the Activities section of your Learning File/Folder.

*In drawing up an assessment plan you performed the first of four management functions, namely **planning**.*

Of course it is easier to draw up an assessment plan for a single class, grade or subject that it is to do so for the entire school but all schools are required to have annual assessment plans – by SAQA and by the DoE. In this case, each teacher is supposed to draw up his/her plan, and then submit it to his/her Head of Department, who must ensure that is neither excessive nor insufficient, for approval. The Head of Department, having used the individual assessment plans of all the teachers in the grade or learning area concerned as basis, must then draw up an assessment plan for his/her department and submit this to the SMT, which then has to draw up an assessment plan for the school, using the inputs provided by the various Heads of Department.

*The second function, typically following planning is **organizing**, i.e. putting your plans into action. In the case of assessment that would involve your making all the necessary preparations for the assessment – e.g. designing and duplicating assessment instruments, arranging a venue, preparing learners and parents, if applicable, for assessment – and the actual conducting of the assessment – i.e. using the instrument to collect evidence, interpreting, evaluating and recording the evidence, providing feedback to learners, their parents and other interested parties, and handling appeals.*

In this process the role of the principal is critical, as the resources need to be made available and the teachers supported and monitored in undertaking these tasks of planning and organizing assessment.

stop & think

What are the things that you will have to consider when drawing up the school assessment plan? Should you, for example, consider cost, physical and human resources? Should they ensure that no learner is assessed in more than one learning area on a single day? Should you consider processes and/or procedures related to quality assurance, such as moderation? Should you include deadlines for marking, completion of recording sheets and report cards, etc.? Should you have contingency plans in place, in case something goes wrong?

What are some of the things that you could, or should, do to prepare learners for assessment? Do you think there is a need to prepare parents for learner assessments? What would such preparation entail and how could it benefit learners?

activity 3f

time allocation

± 4–6 hours

Arrange a meeting with all the teachers in your school who teach the same grade, subject or learning area and brainstorm the questions posed in **Stop and Think**.
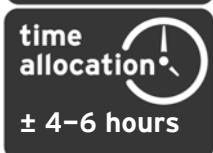
You should brainstorm these with the rest of the SMT. Perhaps you might even wish to brainstorm the questions with learners and their parents.

Based on the insights gained during your brainstorming session/s, draw up a project management plan (see **Text 3** for an example) that you can use in making the necessary preparations for assessment.

Having made all the preparations, conduct the assessment and prepare a written report in which you comment on the workability of your initial assessment plan and the effectiveness of your preparations.

File your plan and report in the Activities section of your Learning File/Folder for later use.

activity 3g

time allocation

± 60 min

Reflect on ways in which educational managers could create opportunities for educators to be trained as assessors – training workshops at schools, use of accredited, registered assessor training providers, use of university staff, use of competent school-based assessors, community members or departmental officials.
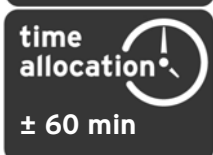
Having thought critically about the possibilities, organize a staff meeting at which you (a) discuss these possibilities, and (b) draw up an assessor development plan that would benefit your school.

3.7 Conclusion

This unit dealt with outcomes-based assessment as a specific way of collecting evidence of learner progress and/or achievement. Specific attention was paid to the differences between outcomes, standards and criteria and the use of these to design assessment instruments and/or to interpret and evaluate assessment results. In this regard we looked specifically at rubrics as a tool for interpreting and evaluating results.

Attention was also given to the integration of teaching, learning and assessment and the need to plan and prepare and coordinate for assessment at the beginning of the school year so as to ensure that learners will know what is expected of them, when they have to meet these expectation, how they will be expected to demonstrate their competence and, in this way making them co-responsible for their own learning.

It is important that education leaders are able to give practical support to educators as they engage with the planning and conducting of assessment and that leaders ensure that the necessary time and resources are made available.

key points

The most important points made in this unit are that:
- Assessment must be based on the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards stipulated in the various NCS documents
- Teaching, learning and assessment must be integrated and must contribute to better teaching, learning and curriculum development
- Assessment instruments/strategies must be appropriate to the target group, assessment purpose and subject/learning area or role performance in terms of which assessment is taking place.
- The more accommodating assessment is in terms of learner needs the more likely it is that assessment will be perceived as fair and experienced as a positive process.
- The interpretation and evaluation of assessment results must be criterion-referenced.
- The better assessment is planned and the better the learners and other parties concerned are prepared for assessment, the more likely it is that assessment results will be valid and reliable.

Assignment 1

Pretend that you are the principal of a new school and that you have seriously considered the implications that the adoption of an outcomes-based system has for assessment. Using the insights you gained in reflecting on these challenges, indicate – in writing – how you would go about meeting/overcoming these challenges in your school. How, for example, would you ensure that:

- Learners have some say in when and how they are assessed (Bloom's 'readiness' principle)
- Learners have more than one opportunity to demonstrate competence against a particular standard (Spady's 'expanded opportunity' principle)

- Assessment results are fed back into teaching, learning, lesson planning and materials development?
- Teachers assess what and how they have taught and what and how learners have learnt?
- There is no unfair discrimination against any learner (as far as assessment is concerned) and/or any teacher (as far as teacher appraisal is concerned)?
- Assessment does not become more important than teaching and learning?

Monitoring OBA: a question of accountability

unit 4

Monitoring OBA:
a question of accountability

4.1 Introduction

You will remember that we referred to recording and reporting in Unit 2, where we indicated that the results of all formal, or planned, assessments should be recorded in some or other form and that ***recording*** was a crucial element not only of quality control but also of the democratic principle of transparency. The availability of recorded marks is also important, we indicated, in cases where learners lodge an appeal against assessment judgements and/or in cases where the sufficiency and fairness of assessment judgments are questioned.

With regard to ***reporting*** we indicated that feedback is an important element of assessment. Formalised feedback often takes the form of written reports but it could also be done orally, either by a group/panel of assessors or in the form of a one-on-one conversation. We also indicated that *not* providing feedback could be construed as an attempt to 'cover up' flaws in the assessment process. Reporting is, therefore, crucial to transparency as well as to the maintenance of communication and good relations with the parent and learner community.

A third procedure, not yet mentioned, is *reviewing.* Reviewing – re viewing – implies a 'looking back' at a process or activity with a view to identifying its strengths or weaknesses. By implication reviews are conducted with the aim of amending, adjusting and/or improving the process/activity in future. Reviews, audits and self-evaluation exercises promote accountability and are crucial to the maintenance of quality systems. In terms of assessment a review would entail looking back not only on the academic achievements/results but also looking back – reflecting – on the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment processes and the validity and reliability of assessment instruments.

Unit 4 learning outcomes and assessment criteria

This unit focuses specifically on recording, reporting and reviewing as assessment activities. By the end of this unit you should be able to demonstrate the ability to apply your knowledge and understanding of assessment administration in your own teachers'/school's assessment practices. To convince you assessors that you have this ability you will have to provide evidence that you:

- Can construct and complete recording and reporting forms
- Can provide interested parties with constructive feedback on assessments
- Can establish and manage appeal procedures
- Can conduct reviews of your own and others' assessment practices.

4.2 Recording and reporting progress and achievement

As indicated in the Introduction to this unit, the establishment and maintenance of sound recording and reporting procedures are crucial to the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment processes. Records should ideally contain *cumulative* and evidence of learner achievement and development as demonstrated in *formal* assessments.

activity 4a

time allocation

± 4 hours

Review – that is, critically consider, the recording system at your school. Then, in writing, answer the following questions.
- To what would you ascribe differences in the minimum number of assessments in the various learning areas and grades?
- Do you think the Department of Education should prescribe a minimum number of assessments per subject/grade per year? Give reasons for your answer.
- Is it possible that too many formal assessments could have a negative impact on learner performance? Give reasons for your answer.
- Compare the recording sheets used in your school with those in a neighbouring school and indicate:
  o How they differ from each other
  o The possible reasons for the differences
  o Which one you think is more learner-centred, with reasons
  o Which one is more manageable from a school point of view, with reasons
- Organize a staff meeting aimed at discussing the possible adjustment of your recording sheets to the end-of year schedules that you have to submit to the Provincial Department of Education at the end of each year. Your agenda should include a discussion of the provincial schedules, a discussion of your own recording system, a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of aligning the two systems and one or more resolutions in this regard. Appoint someone to take minutes of the meeting and use these as basis for a brief report on the meeting and its outcome.

File all these pieces of writing in the Activities Section of your Learning File/Folder for later use.

our comments

Recording is crucial to the establishment of a system that is both accountable and transparent. These are not, however, the only reasons why we keep records of learner achievements. Based on these records teachers and school managers could provide concerned parties – learners, parents, departmental officials, school governing body members, etc. – with feedback on assessment results and/or the standard of teaching and learning at the school. As far as feedback to learners and parents is concerned, this usually happens in the form of written reports, which summarise learner achievement and progress; provide information on learner attitude, effort and development, and officially acknowledges that the learner has had the opportunity to demonstrate his/her competence in a formalised way. As is the case with all official school documentation, the head of the institution, as the designated manager, should sign all reports.

Current policy documents indicate that formal reporting on learner assessment should be done at regular intervals and/or at the request of a learner, parent or prospective employer and may take the form of meetings or written reports. It is, however, up to the institution concerned to decide what the reports should look like – should they be computer printouts, should they be in the form of a report card, etc. In most cases, though, provincial departments of education provide schools with guidelines and/or requirements that should be met in the compilation of reports.

It should be clear from this discussion that the recording and reporting of assessment results also need to be managed, and managed well. In other words, the preparation and completion of recording sheets are crucial to the integrity of the assessment procedures and results. To ensure such integrity, recording sheets and report cards should preferably be developed prior to assessments, as part of the preparation/organizing phase, and one or more workshops should be conducted with relevant staff members to ensure that everybody is satisfied with the forms and understands how they must be completed.

Also, just as the assessment instruments and the learner scripts are 'moderated' for accuracy, credibility and fairness, the record sheets and report cards should also be checked and signed – by the HOD or another member of the SMT - before any feedback is given to learners, parents or other interested parties.

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activity 4b

time allocation

± 2 hours

Write one or two paragraphs in which you describe the various feedback procedures used in your school, indicating which are most and least effective.
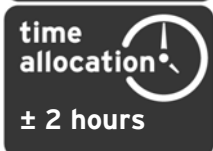
Compare your feedback procedures with those used at one of your neighbouring schools and comment on the reasons for the differences between then if any.

Write one paragraph in which you indicate what you would change in terms of current methods of feedback in your school if you could. Provide reasons for your answer.

---

our comments

Apart from the record sheets on which marks and/or formative comments are entered, each teacher and learner is also required to prepare a portfolio of evidence that should be available for perusal whenever this is required – during a self-evaluation exercise, an external review or audit, an appeal, etc.

The Protocol stipulates very clearly that the recorded pieces of evidence included in these portfolios should be clearly marked because they are the primary pieces of evidence and it is they that will determine whether or not a learner should progress to the next grade and/or receive his/her school leaving certificate at the end of Grade 12 (DoE 2005:11).

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activity 4c

time allocation

± 2 hours

Currently stipulations regarding teacher and learner portfolios are included in the National Protocol on Assessment (paragraphs 44 through 56) but, as indicated earlier, this document is currently under review and might well be replaced by another.
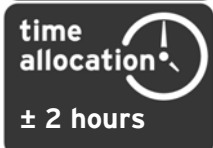
Imagine that you are a member of the committee responsible for reviewing this document, with specific reference to the criteria for portfolios. Your brief indicates that you should, in terms of your own experience with portfolios, recommend a

new set of criteria that will not only be easy to manage but that will also be teacher- and learner-friendly.

OR

Design a rubric (see Unit 3) against which the quality of either a teacher or a learner portfolio could be assessed. Then ask one or more of your colleagues, or a group of learners if your rubric is going to be used for a learner portfolio, to comment on your rubric and to suggest, with valid reasons, any changes they think you should make to it. Once you are satisfied with the rubric assess at least three portfolios against it and provide the compiler of the portfolio with a short written report that not only highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the portfolio but also provides them with guidance on how to improve it.

OR

Write a short essay (150 to 200 words) in which you critically comment on your school's assessment policy and/or assessment plan, with specific reference to the section on 'Appeals'. If you find this section wanting, you should include recommendations in your essay on how to improve it.

File the results of this activity in the Activities section of your Learning File/Folder.

our comments

Although we have not explicitly addressed assessment reviews in this unit, you have, in various activities from Unit 1 through 4, been reviewing assessment documents, processes and procedures. We trust that, based on what you have learnt in the process you should be able to conduct a review of assessment in your school, prepare a report that sets out your findings and conclusions and effect the necessary adjustments. You need not, therefore, conduct a review to convince us of your ability to do so.

Reviews are, however, an important means of quality assurance therefore you should, at the earliest sign that there are problems with assessment in your school or department, conduct such a review. It is also a good idea to include regular reviews – every three years, for example – in your school assessment plan. In this way you will ensure that the standard and credibility of assessment in your school remain intact and that new ideas on assessment are considered on a regular basis.

activity 4d

time allocation

± 8 hours

Does your school have an effective school assessment policy and school assessment plan?
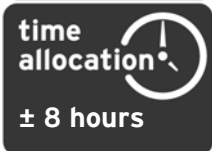
In this final activity, you need to develop or review, your school's policy and plan. In this module we have explored the requirements for effective assessment practice in an outcomes-based education system. These requirements provide some guidelines against which to review your school's policies and practices.

The *National Protocol on Assessment* and/or any subsequent amendments provide you with the statutory requirements that must be met and against which you can review your school's own policy.

You should benchmark your school's assessment policy against those of other schools in your cluster or area. An example of a possible school assessment policy can also be found on pp. 241+ of Clarke, A. 2007. *The Handbook of School Management*. Cape Town:Kate McCallum (distributed by Macmillan).

Having reviewed and where necessary updated your school assessment policy, it is then necessary to consider how you can ensure that the policy is actually implemented.

This requires the development of an assessment plan that sets out objectives, activities, responsibility and accountability and timelines.

4.3 Conclusion

This unit concludes the module on assessment. It focused primarily on understanding the assessment process and the management implications thereof. Specific mention was made of the important quality assurance function served by regular self-evaluation or review exercises. Finally, this unit indicated that assessment is not a linear process, but one in which the results of each stage are fed back into the process as a whole so as to ensure that it improves with each round.

key points

- Quality recording and reporting are crucial to the effective and efficient administration of the assessment process.
- Institutional and provincial recording and reporting formats must be aligned to national requirements
- Providing feedback on learner achievement to parents is important in the maintenance of school/community communication
- Learners have the right to appeal against assessment results and each institution should, therefore, provide for these in their assessment plans.
- Educational institutions should conduct regular reviews of their assessment policies, procedures and plans to ensure that these are responsive to changing needs and/or policies.

Optional assignment

 As indicated in the *Introductory Unit* to this module, you are not writing an examination to prove your competence as an assessor.

Your final assignment serves as an examination.

Since this module is based on a registered unit standard, you could, on its successful completion, apply for registration as an assessor, in terms of RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning), at any sectoral education and training authority (SETA). Should you wish to do so, you would have to prepare a portfolio of evidence that would demonstrate your competence as an assessor in terms of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria stipulated in the Unit Standard.

Your final assignment is the compilation of such a portfolio of evidence. Select, from the Activities Section of your Learning File/Folder, those activities that could serve as evidence of your competence to plan and conduct assessment. Use the Assessment Criteria stipulated in the Unit Standard as indicators of what you should include. Should the activities in your folder not be sufficient, include any other evidence relating to your school experience as an assessor and submit your portfolio to your lecturer for assessment.

Your lecturer's assessment of your competence, based on this portfolio, will determine whether or not you pass this module but it will not in any way impact on your eligibility as a registered assessor. To apply for registration you will have to submit a portfolio of evidence to the SETA of your choice. It could be the same portfolio you submit to your lecturer, perhaps with adjustments and/or additions suggested by him/her.

OR

Using the assessment unit standard as a point of departure, formulate your own 'unit standard' for the management of assessment at school level. Having done so, compile a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates your competence in this regard.

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Texts & Templates

The reader contains a variety of different texts which were referred to in the Learning Guide and which provide the basis of activities or extensions of the discussion in the main text.

TEMPLATES

The various templates presented in the module can be adapted to suit your own purposes.

Reader

Text 1: Key terms and the National Protocol on Assessment

(Assessment Policy Government Gazette, Vol. 402, No. 19640, 23 December 1998
Regulation Gazette, No. 6397, No. R. 1718, Appendix B – see boxed definitions below)
(Biggs, J & Collis, K. 1982. Evaluating the Quality of Learning. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, San Francisco: Academic Press, pp 6-7)

Summative assessment	Used to provide information about a learner's level of competence at the completion of a grade, level or programme.

"Summative evaluation is what most people understand by evaluation: grading. Some final statement is made about the 'value' of the learning as far as that student is concerned. (…):
The certificate or diploma issued by an institution is a public statement that the graduate is now capable of extracting teeth, teaching children, flying an airplane, or otherwise professing expertise in some subject or subjects."

Formative assessment	Used to support the learner developmentally and to feed back into the teaching/learning process.

"Formative evaluation, on the other hand, is an ongoing process that is more remedial in intent. The evaluation is not the end of the process, but a new beginning. It the student did not meet the initial requirements or objectives, then what went wrong? Did the student ignore some relevant detail; does she find difficulty in 'carrying' in arithmetic; does she lack some concept that is critical to her understanding of the material?
Summative evaluation is made after instruction is formally over for that unit, but formative evaluation is part of the ongoing instructional process. It implies a deep relationship between what is intended to be taught, an analytical understanding by the teacher of what is involved in learning that particular unit, and an appreciation of what steps might be taken to improve things."

Continuous assessment	An ongoing process that measures a learner's achievement during the course of a grade or level, providing information that is used to support a learner's development and enable improvements to be made in the learning and teaching process.

Questions

1. On the basis of the above definitions and your own understanding, what is continuous assessment? Is it the same as formative assessment?
2. What are the advantages of continuous assessment?
3. What are the disadvantages?

4. How can the potential of continuous assessment be exploited?
5. How can some of the disadvantages be overcome?

The National Protocol on Assessment can be accessed at
www.education.gov.za/policy documents.

Text 2: Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

What is RPL?

We are so used to equating learning with educational institutions that we forget that learning is a natural process and that it happens everywhere all the time. The fundamental principle underpinning RPL is that all learning is worthy of recognition and credit, regardless of the time, place and context in which it occurred. This includes partially completed formal studies, work-based and experiential learning.

In brief, RPL is a process that creates the opportunity for people who have acquired knowledge or skills in any way to apply for the recognition and accreditation of such. The claimed knowledge/competence will then be formally assessed against learning outcomes or unit standards to determine the extent to which it reflects the knowledge, skills, attitudes or values described in the outcome/standard. Should the assessment results indicate that the applicant knows and/or can do the things described in the outcome/standard s/he will get credit for such learning, credit that may be used to apply for a job, a promotion or access to further, formal study.

What RPL is not?

RPL is not a quick and easy way in which a person can get something – a qualification – for nothing. Neither is it necessarily a cheap option, because the application also costs money. It is, however, an alternate route to getting credit for what you already know and can do.

RPL and the NQF

In terms of the NQF credit, in the form of some or other qualification, is dependent on the demonstration of **competence,** i.e. evidence of the ability to apply knowledge and understanding to actual tasks or real-life situations. Accumulated credits could, theoretically, be 'cashed in' when applying for access to a particular programme in which the same knowledge/skills are being taught as a module. In practical terms it would mean that an applicant who can prove his/her competence in terms of the particular module/course, could be exempted from studying it while getting credit for it anyway.

What would an RPL assessment entail?

Processes would differ from situation to situation and/or from institution to institution. Usually, however, the applicant will have to demonstrate his/her

competence in the same, or a similar, manner that learners who are formally enrolled for the course would have to demonstrate their competence.
In other words, if they have to demonstrate it by means of a written test, so will the RPL applicant; if they have to demonstrate it by means of a portfolio, so will the RPL applicant, and so on.

The RPL applicant will, however, have access to counselling prior to the assessment, during which session s/he will be guided in terms of the outcomes/standards that must be met and the kind of evidence that s/he will have to collect and/or present in order to qualify for RPL.

Text 3: Assessment principles in practice

PRINCIPLES *Assessment should be:*	IMPLICATIONS IN PRACTICE THIS MEANS THAT:
Criterion-referenced	The collection of evidence should be directed by learning outcomes and/or assessment standards or criteria
	Judgments about progress and/or competence should be based on the extent to which the standards/criteria have been satisfied/met
Rigorous but fair	Standards (outcomes & criteria) must be pre-determined and fixed
	The instruments used to collect evidence of progress or competence should accommodate differences in culture, gender, learning style and tempo, barriers to learning, context and resources
	A range of assessment strategies/instruments should be used to ensure that differences are accommodated
Appropriate and valid	The way in which learning is assessed and the complexity of learning that has to be demonstrated should match the target group, the assessment purpose and the assessment context
Reliable and sufficient	Judgments should be based on evidence
	Evidence should be collected over a period of time and by means of a range of strategies and/or instruments
Integrated and authentic	Assessment should focus on competence and/or cognitive skills rather than on memorised knowledge
	Where possible assessment tasks should reflect real-life situations/contexts
Feasible and sustainable	Assessment should be manageable (labour intensity, resources, people), cost effective, safe, and not too time-consuming.
Systematic and transparent	Assessment should not be conducted on and ad hoc basis but should be planned well in advance
	Learners should be allowed to appeal against results if and when applicable
	Learners should know – before they embark on the learning process – what expectations they have to realize when they reach the end and what options they will have in demonstrating their competence
Learning- and learner oriented	There should be clear links between teaching, learning and assessment
	Assessment results should be used as basis for the adjustment/improvement of programs, materials, teaching and learning processes
	Learners should be prepared for and/or supported in their endeavours to achieve the outcomes and assessment standards
	Assessment results should be available to and/or discussed with learners as soon as possible after assessment
	Where necessary, learners should be given more than one opportunity of demonstrating a single competence.

Planning for assessment

OBJECTIVE/ACTION	PERSON/S INVOLVED	DEADLINE	PERSON IN CHARGE	COSTS INVOLVED	COMMENTS AND/OR CHECK LIST
Designing assessment instruments	Subject/LA teachers	10 March	HOD of subject/LA	None	Maths papers a day late due to HOD illness

Notes:
Our example in the first line does not imply that this is the first task to be done in assessment planning. You might want to train teachers in design first, or conduct agreement trials, etc.
We have not mentioned teachers/HODs by name but it is a good idea to do so because then you know exactly whom to hold responsible for what.
While there are no costs involved in designing instruments there will be cost involved in duplicating/printing them
Remember that you also have to design an assessment timetable which must be made available to all interested parties at the beginning of the year.

Policies and practices for the management of assessment

The education and training system is one in which learning attainment is based on achievement through appropriate assessment of learning outcomes specified in NQF registered standards and qualifications. Assessment can thus be defined as a measurement of the achievement of the learning outcomes/s.

The following elements, amongst others, need to be taken into account in designing, implementing and maintaining the assessment system:

- The assessment strategies must be in keeping with the aims and outcomes of the learning programme or course as these relate to the outcomes specified in the standard or qualification
- A range of parties is involved in the assessment of learners. This can be designed appropriate to context and outcomes and can include self-, peer- and other forms of group assessment. Moderators for assessment and even assessment mentors can be included in this grouping.
- A range of assessment instruments is used in the assessment of learners. This can be designed in accordance with the context and outcome/s
- The timing of assessment must be flexible in order to accommodate the various and peculiar needs of learners.

- Assessment information, including learning outcomes, assessment criteria as well as assessment procedures and dates should be provided to all learners and assessors
- Records of assessment must be kept and learners must receive detailed and accurate feedback on their progress and performance.
- The processes and results of assessment must fulfil the requirements of the NQF standards and qualifications for which the provider has been accredited and must meet the requirements of the ETQA.

Extracted taken from **Criteria and Guidelines for Providers** (SAQA, October 2001:26)

Appeals procedures

A critical issue supporting good assessment systems design and management is that of appeals. This involves ensuring that learners have the right – and opportunity - to appeal against an assessment outcome, either to the facilitator of learning and/or assessment and, if dissatisfied with the outcome, to the management of the provider and, in the final instance, to the ETQA for the specific sector.

Learner records

Every provider will be required to demonstrate that they have a system and the facilities for maintaining and updating detailed information about past, present and potential learners. This requirement is essential in order to be able to meet the ETQA reporting requirements. In addition to enabling the ETQA and SAQA to maintain accurate information on national learner and learning profiles, this information can serve many of the quality requirements for the provider, including the evaluation of is policies and practices.

Knowledge of learners and their needs is essentially what drives the purpose and policies of the provider. This information is also used to design learning programmes, modules or courses within programmes or to NQF standards, materials, and learner support systems and services. Updating and reviewing this information in a formal and regular way allows the provider to develop a flexible and learner-centred approach to learning provision and learner assessment.

One of the issues that must be borne in mind by all providers, both in designing systems to store learner information and reporting, is that of learner **confidentiality**. Such systems should be designed taking the needs of different users into account. Providers should also have policies in place for the learner information they release, for example to someone sponsoring the learner. With respect to reporting on learners and learner achievements, the constitutional right to privacy needs to be taken into account when designing what and how information will be stored for each learner.

Extracted from **Criteria and Guidelines for Providers** (SAQA, October 2001:26)

Report cards

The National Curriculum Statement (Grades R-12) states that formal report cards should be sent to parents once a term. The report cards must provide a clear holistic picture of the learner's achievements in different Learning Programmes,

Learning Areas and Subjects. This means that an overall rating of a learner's performance in each Learning Programme, Learning Area and subject must be included in the formal report card.

The achievement rating in a report card should be indicated by a combination of percentages, codes and comments. The percentages and codes should be in accordance with the stipulations in paragraphs 18 and 21 of this document. The comments should provide more information on the strengths and developmental needs of the learner.

Report cards should include information in the following essential components:

- **Personal details:** Name, grade and class of learner; date of birth, school attendance profile
- **Official school details:** Year and term, name of school, date, signature and comment of parent or guardian, teacher and principal, dates of closing and opening of school, school stamp, explanation of the codes of the national coding system
- **Performance details:** A percentage and/or a code indicating the level of performance per Learning Programme, Learning Area and Subject, and a description of the strengths and developmental needs of the learner
- **Constructive feedback:** The feedback should contain comments about the learner's performance in relation to his/her previous performance and in relation to the requirements of the Learning Programme, Learning Area and Subject.

A report card may be produced electronically or manually using different styles preferred by the school but should contain all the information mentioned in paragraph 68.

A report card is an official document that is used to give feedback to parents on the achievement of learners. Schools should ensure that there are not errors, erasures or corrections that will compromise the legal status of the report cards. The school management team is responsible for ensuring that reports issued to learners do not contain any errors.

Schools should not accept report cards with errors from other schools. Once a fraudulent report has been identified, the matter should be reported to the principal of the affected school and to the district office and/or provincial department of education.

In cases where a fraudulent report card is discovered, the head of the provincial department of education should institute an internal investigation of the matter and may take legal steps where necessary.

The parent(s) or guardian has the right of access to report cards of their children.

Schools may not withhold report cards from learners for any reason whatsoever.

Extracted from *The National Protocol for Assessment in Schools (Grades R – 12)* (DoE, October 2005: 23/4)

**Minimum number
Of recorded formal assessments
Per phase per year**

TABLE 14: FORMAL ASSESSMENTS FOR GRADES R-3

LEARNING PROGRAMME	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	TERM 4	TOTAL
Literacy (Languages)	4	4	4	4	16
Numeracy (Mathematics)	3	3	3	3	12
Life Skills (Life Orientation)	1	1	1	1	4

TABLE 15: FORMAL ASSESSMENTS FOR GRADES 4-6

LEARNING PROGRAMME	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	TERM 4	TOTAL
Language 1	3	3	3	3	12
Language 2	2	2	2	2	8
Language 3 *(Optional)*	1	1	1	1	4
Mathematics	3	3	3	3	12
Natural Sciences	2	2	2	2	8
Social Sciences	2	2	2	2	8
Technology	1	1	1	1	4
Economic and Management Sciences	1	1	1	1	4
Life Orientation	1	1	1	1	4
Arts and Culture	1	1	1	1	4

TABLE 16: FORMAL ASSESSMENTS FOR GRADES 7-9

LEARNING PROGRAMME	TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	TERM 4	TOTAL
Language 1	4	4	4	4	16
Language 2	3	3	3	3	12
Language 3 *(Optional)*	3	3	3	3	12
Mathematics	3	3	3	3	12
Natural Sciences	2	2	2	2	8
Social Sciences	2	2	2	2	8
Technology	1	1	1	1	4
Economic and Management Sciences	1	1	1	1	4
Life Orientation	1	1	1	1	4
Arts and Culture	1	1	1	1	4

TABLE 17: FORMAL ASSESSMENTS FOR GRADES 10 - 12

LEARNING PROGRAMME		TERM 1	TERM 2	TERM 3	TERM 4	TOTAL
Language 1: Home Language		5	5*	5	4*	19
Language 2: Choice of Home or 1st Additional Language	HL	5	5*	5	4*	19
	FAL	4	4*	4	3*	12
Mathematics or Mathematics Literacy		2	2*	2	2*	8
Life Orientation		1	1	1	2	5
Choice Subject 1		2	2*	2	1*	7
Choice Subject 2		2	2*	2	1*	7
Choice Subject 3		2	2*	2	1*	7

* One of these must be an examination

Extracted from the *National Protocol for Assessment in Schools (Grades R – 12)* (DoE, October 2005: 23/4)

Text 4: Bloom's taxonomy: a tabular illustration

COGNITIVE ABILITIES	CLARIFICATION / EXPLANATION	REQUISITE LEARNER ACTIVITIES
1. Knowledge (lowest level of the taxonomy; easiest kind of learning)	Refers to the ability to recall what was learnt, e.g. facts, processes, procedures, formulae, etc.	Learners should show that they recognise things for what they are by identifying, defining, listing, labelling, matching, and naming these
2. Understanding	Refers to the ability to make sense of something, i.e. to process information and/or to read 'between the lines'	Learners should be able to explain things in their own words by, for example, describing, summarizing, paraphrasing, generalizing, etc.
3. Application	Refers to the ability to use what one knows and understands at an abstract level as basis for doing practical things.	Learners should prove that they can *do* something with what they know and understand by, for example, solving problems, creating texts, doing research, managing a project, constructing models, using some kind of apparatus (e.g. a computer, stove, camera), etc.
4. Analysis	Refers to the ability to identify relationships between different elements, and/or to break down materials into their composite parts to see how they are put together and/or how they work.	Learners should show that they can identify relationships between different things by comparing/contrasting and/or classifying/categorizing these; justifying their responses; providing examples/illustrations of things, drawing inferences/conclusions, etc.
5. Synthesis	Refers to the ability to create something 'whole' by rearranging individual parts into something new/original. As is the case in analysis, this assumes an awareness of the relationships between parts.	Learners should show that they can combine, compile, construct, organize, write, draw and build things. What they need to do to prove this ability is the direct opposite of what they did in analysis.
6. Evaluation (highest level of this taxonomy; most difficult learning requiring careful preparation and scaffolding)	Refers to the ability to judge the value or quality of something.	Learners should show that they can make judgements on the basis of evidence rather than on their own biases or perceptions, i.e. to distinguish between what they prefer/like and what is good/right, e.g. a poem, a performance, a piece of writing, a lesson.

NOTE:
While these categories are given here as discrete categories they are interdependent, with the higher cognitive skills dependent on the lower ones. A person would not, for example, be able to judge whether a sonnet is good or bad

unless s/he has analysed it to see whether it satisfies the criteria for a good sonnet, and s/he will not be able to analyse it unless s/he knows what a good sonnet should look like. Knowledge and understanding are, therefore, essential to the development of all the other cognitive abilities.

Text 5: Outcomes-based assessment exemplars

To see how assessment criteria can be applied in everyday class assignments, study the example of a history assessment task in the text box below. Note that the assignment tells learners not only *what* they have to do and *how* they have to do it but also how their final product will be *assessed*.

Also note that the teacher took cognisance of different *learning styles*/preferences by allowing learners to choose, from a series of *options*, the way in which they would prefer to present their product and/or demonstrate their competence.

Land Distribution

The issue of land distribution is currently being debated again, in South Africa and elsewhere, and often arguments are emotional rather than rational.

Research the history of land distribution in South Africa, focusing on land treatises and on how they have influenced the way land was allocated and used over the years.

Collect information from at least three source types (books, interviews, articles, legal documents, etc.).

Based on what you discover about the treaties and their influence, construct an argument for or against returning the land to its original owners. Include in your argument specific references to co-operation and/or the use of political power and/or force to appropriate and redistribute land in the past.

You may present your argument in the form of an essay, a video documentary, a debate or panel discussion, a pamphlet written and produced for distribution to the public, a slide show, a play or a short film. You must, however, communicate your point of view by combining verbal and visual communication techniques.

Your presentation will be assessed in terms of the following criteria:

- Your knowledge and understanding of land distribution issues in South Africa
- Your ability to identify and discuss the reasons for conflict in the distribution and redistribution of land
- Your ability to argue for and/or against something
- Your ability to provide evidence to back up the claims you make in your argument
- Your ability to collect information from a variety of sources
- Your ability to enhance verbal communication with visual techniques

NOTE:
You might find it interesting to analyse this assessment task in terms of Bloom's Taxonomy to see whether it focuses more on lower or higher cognitive skills. Now consider the following excerpt from 'Assessment in Practice' (Draft version before DTP)

3.1 The Purpose of Assessment

The purposes for assessment of learners are many and varied. In this booklet, we focus on the main purpose of assessment given in the RNCS.
POLICY
The Revised National Curriculum Statement (Maths RNCS 2002, p 94) states that the main purpose of assessment is to:

> '...enhance individual growth and development, to monitor the progress of learners and to facilitate their learning'

This is a demanding task for educators! It requires an environment that gives learners opportunities for "growth and development". This includes assessing learners in an ongoing way in order to "monitor their progress". It also suggests that the purpose of the monitoring or assessing is to "facilitate their learning".

What this means is that assessment is only effective and purposeful if it is an ***integral*** part of the entire learning and teaching cycle. This is what we focus on in this booklet.

How do we make assessment an integral part of the learning process?

The steps described below suggest how we can work with an ongoing cycle of planning, facilitating learning and assessing.

1. PLAN

In planning our work, we start by asking: What do the learners need to know? In other words, what outcomes do we want them to achieve? We ask ourselves: What learning opportunities should we provide for them so that they can achieve the learning, and produce evidence to show that they have achieved the outcome?

This involves three steps:

- Consult your term or year plan to see which **Learning Outcomes** to use for teaching and assessing. You need to plan your teaching to cover concrete, clearly defined Assessment Standards within that outcome.
- Plan a series of lessons, with teacher input and learner activities, that will give learners the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills described in the assessment standards
- Design an assessment task that gives learners a chance to prove (give evidence) that they have learnt and achieved the outcomes you selected.

2. FACILITATE LEARNING

In this part of the cycle, learners have an opportunity to work toward the outcomes. The learners **do** the learning activities that you have chosen. This is an ongoing process that includes teaching (giving them input), mediating their learning, observing their progress and assisting them to achieve the outcomes.

This step will equip the learners with the knowledge, skills and values needed in order to achieve the outcomes.

3. ASSESS

When the learners have had enough opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge that you have planned, they are ready to complete an **assessment** task. The task needs to assess how far the learners are in achieving the outcomes.

Record the results of the assessment. Analyse the group's results to see how they can be helped further towards achieving the outcomes and to inform your planning for the next step of learning needed. It is important to note trends in the class as a whole, their strengths and weaknesses. At times, you may also need to **report** this assessment to parents, staff or others who need to know.

You provide **feedback to learners** to help them identify their own problem areas. If a learner can identify what her problem is, she can begin to work on improving her knowledge and skills. Feedback must be given in a spirit of encouragement and support, emphasising what the learner is able to do and building on this. Negative criticism can just entrench negative attitudes in learners.

4. REFLECT AND DECIDE

You use learners' responses to **reflect** on your own teaching, and to **plan** the details of the next step of the Learning Programme. You may need to think of alternative ways to make the learning easier, provide more learning tasks or redo tasks to assist those learners who have not yet achieved the outcomes.

stop & think !

- Do you think that the cycle described above reflects your understanding of assessment?
- Are here any other steps you think should be included?
- In what ways do you think this cycle reflects what you currently do in your classroom?

The Teaching and Learning Cycle

1. PLAN
Choose Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards
and then plan activities.

- What must learners know and be able to do? What
  are the outcomes?
- What learning opportunities can you provide?
- How can you assess what learners have achieved?

2. FACILITATE LEARNING
Teaching and learning takes place.

- Learners engage in learning activities.
- You assess learners informally while you teach,
  observe and mediate.

3. ASSESS
The learners' achievement is assessed and results recorded
and interpreted.

- Have the learners achieved the intended outcomes?
- Record your assessment.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Provide constructive feedback.

4. REFLECT and DECIDE
If the group of learners has satisfactory results, you can
move to the next step in your plan. Individuals or the
whole group may need concepts reinforced and another
opportunity to be assessed in some way.