

# Tea Project

SINCE 2016

TEACHING IN ENGLISH  
FOR ACADEMICS  
-ULB-



ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT  
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING



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# 4.1 TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSING STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

Many of the activities in the previous sections are effective ways for assessing whether learning is happening. It is important to get a regular picture of whether the students are learning what you think they should be.

We make a lot of assumptions about the acquisition of knowledge of our students, but we are very often wrong!

## THIS MIGHT FOCUS ON:

- ◆ The acquisition of specific knowledge or concepts.
- ◆ Their understanding of specific terms (possibly in comparison with the same terms in French or another language).
- ◆ Their capacities in key skills for your course (e.g. the application of scientific data about environmental change to the analysis of newspaper articles).

### GO TO:

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## 4.2 SELF ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

In self assessment, students reflect on and assess their own progress and knowledge, ideally against a clear set of criteria.

They don't always need to communicate the results to the teacher, but if they do, it does enable the teacher to adapt their teaching if there are major areas of misunderstanding.

### TECHNIQUES INCLUDE:

- ◆ **General rating** (e.g. How confident do you feel about the material learned in today's lesson? Rate from 1-5).
- ◆ **Specific rating** (e.g. Rate the following areas covered today from 1 (easy) to 5 (hard)).
- ◆ **Specific feedback** (What did you find difficult about the preparation exam that we did last week?).

### OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ To enable students to reflect on what they have learned, their strengths and weaknesses.
- ◆ To deepen their understanding of the expectations of the teacher by engaging with assessment criteria in an active way.
- ◆ To give the teacher a portrait of how their students feel that they are doing.
- ◆ To open up channels of communication and help students feel less anonymous in a big course.

## 4.3 PEER ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

In peer assessment, students assess each other, ideally against a clear set of criteria. It is useful for the students to follow the same assessment procedure that you follow. This helps to deepen their understanding of what you will expect in the final assessment and how you will evaluate them.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

The students are invited to complete a feedback sheet for presentations given by their peers. They can give a grade and a comment under a number of criteria including: critical analysis, quality of the presentation, language, time-keeping and originality.

Even if you don't give students the final word on grading, always ask for their evaluation before giving yours. When you give your feedback, explain your thinking and justify your grades at each stage. Compare the two assessments to identify gaps.

NB: Students may need time to become effective at peer assessment. Some are overly generous, others unnecessarily harsh!

### OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ By giving feedback, students engage more meaningfully with what is expected of them and what they will need to do in their exam.
- ◆ To give the teacher a picture of the students' perceptions of the exam requirements.

## 4.4 BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE

Give your students a short, simple questionnaire at the start of a course or before the introduction of a new unit. It could be designed to uncover students' preconceptions, but you can adapt it to address any areas you wish.

Use the questionnaire again at the end of the unit, and repeat the exercise, or share the initial findings with students.

You could ask the students why they signed up for your course or what they hope to get out of it.

Add in a section that requires the student to write a short paragraph for a quick view on their written skills.

*TEA Project* advisors can help you to analyse the work from a language perspective.

### OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ To obtain a quick picture of the students' knowledge or experiences in an area.
- ◆ To establish early dialogue between the teacher and the students.



## 4.5 THE MUDDIEST POINT

At the end of a lecture, ask the students to write down 'the muddiest point' on a piece of paper or an internet platform. This means that they indicate the part of the lecture that they found the most difficult to understand because it wasn't clear, it was challenging or it was confusing.

Extend the question to check whether language confusions were part of the problem.

Your experience will also tell you what students are likely to find difficult, so you can give them options to choose from.

### OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ To enable students to communicate which areas are difficult for them.
- ◆ To enable the teacher to establish whether they need to return to a particular subject or not.

## 4.6 MODEL EXAM QUESTIONS

Give students several examples of previous answers to exam questions which are similar in style to the questions that they will need to complete. Ask the students to grade the answers, giving reasons for their decisions. Ideally provide them with the same rubric that you will use.

Provide a weak, average and strong answer to the same question.

Compare your grades to the students' and explore the discrepancies.

Give students clear feedback on the strengths, weaknesses and common mistakes from previous years.

Use the opportunity to stress that language is less important than content.

### OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ To demystify the exam grading process.
- ◆ To give students deeper engagement with what will be expected of them.

## 4.7 WRITING EXAM QUESTIONS

When you are writing your exams or assessments, consider different question types to minimise the interference of language related problems that might block communication of the student's content knowledge.

Research shows that students working in a second language are more likely to be penalised by long form exam answers.

### LOW LINGUISTIC DEMAND

- ◆ Multiple choice questions.
- ◆ Multiple choice gap fill.
- ◆ Matching (text with visuals).
- ◆ Sequence texts.

### MEDIUM LINGUISTIC DEMAND

- ◆ Graph analysis with sentence matching.
- ◆ Full sentence answers.

### HIGH LINGUISTIC DEMAND

- ◆ Open questions with short answers (250 words).
- ◆ Questions with 'justify', 'discuss', 'argue'.

## 4.8 VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Ask the students to review what they have learned by presenting information in a graphical or visual format. This might use charts, concept maps or diagrams and can include the use of both key words and images. Depending on the needs of your students, you will need to decide how much initial information you want to give, and whether you provide a template for the concept map. You could consider:

- ◆ No pre-prepared template or information. The students have to choose the key words and/or images themselves and construct a diagram to show the relationships between them;
- ◆ A partial template with some key elements provided but with space for students to add their own words and ideas;
- ◆ A full template with blank spaces and key words provided. The students then fill in the gaps.

Use these mindmaps to gain an understanding of how well the students have grasped the course material as well as to give feedback. You may not have time for individual feedback but taking two or three examples (anonymised if necessary) and sharing your evaluation with the whole group will be very valuable.

### OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ To give students the opportunity to synthesise their knowledge and understanding.
- ◆ To gain an understanding of how they understand relationships between ideas and concepts.
- ◆ To give feedback on higher level conceptual understanding.

# NOTES

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# NOTES

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