

An Assessment Manifesto

This 10-point manifesto is taken from the end section of *500 Tips on Assessment* by Sally Brown, Phil Race and Brenda Smith, published by Kogan Page in the Spring of 1996.

We state some values which we believe should underpin assessment, whatever form it takes and whatever purpose it serves. Our thinking on these values owes a debt to the work of the Open Learning Foundation Assessment Issues Group, in which we all participated, and to the values adopted by the UK Staff and Educational Development Association for its Teacher Accreditation Scheme, and Fellowship Scheme.

1. Assessment should be based on an understanding of how students learn. Assessment should play a positive role in the learning experiences of students.
2. Assessment should accommodate individual differences in students. A diverse range of assessment instruments and processes should be employed, so as not to disadvantage any particular individual or group of learners. Assessment processes and instruments should accommodate and encourage creativity and originality shown by students.
3. The purposes of assessment need to be clearly explained. Staff, students, and the outside world need to be able to see why assessment is being used, and the rationale for choosing each individual form of assessment in its particular context.
4. Assessment needs to be valid. By this, we mean that assessment methods should be chosen which directly measure that which it is intended to measure, and not just a reflection in a different medium of the knowledge, skills or competences being assessed.
5. Assessment instruments and processes need to be reliable and consistent. As far as is possible, subjectivity should be eliminated, and assessment should be carried out in ways where the grades or scores that students are awarded are independent of the assessor who happens to mark their work. External examiners and moderators should be active contributors to assessment, rather than observers.
6. All assessment forms should allow students to receive feedback on their learning and their performance. Assessment should be a developmental activity. There should be no hidden agendas in assessment, and we should be prepared to justify to students the grades or scores we award them, and help students to work out how to improve. Even when summative forms of assessment are employed, students should be provided with feedback on their performance, and information to help them identify where their strengths and weaknesses are.
7. Assessment should provide staff and students with opportunities to reflect on their practice and their learning. Assessment instruments and processes should be the subject of continuous evaluation and adjustment. Monitoring and adjustment of the quality of assessment should be built in to quality control processes in universities and professional bodies.
8. Assessment should be an integral component of course design, and not something bolted on afterwards. Teaching and learning elements of each course should be designed in the full knowledge of the sorts of assessment students will encounter,

- and be designed to help them show the outcomes of their learning under favourable conditions.
9. The amount of assessment should be appropriate. Students' learning should not be impeded by being driven by an overload of assessment requirements, nor should the quality of the teaching conducted by staff be impaired by excessive burdens of assessment tasks.
 10. Assessment criteria need to be understandable, explicit and public. Students need to be able to tell what is expected of them in each form of assessment they encounter. Assessment criteria also need to be understandable to employers, and others in the outside world.