

NSW
EDUCATION
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Principles of Assessment for Stage 6

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Introduction

NSW syllabuses promote an integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Schools use syllabuses, assessment and reporting materials and Assessment Certification and Examination (ACE) requirements to develop school-based assessment programs.

This advice informs school policies, practices and procedures for implementing Stage 6 school-based assessment.

Useful Information

Additional information and advice for Stage 6 is available on the NESA website:

- Higher School Certificate (HSC)
- Stronger HSC Standards
- Assessment Certification Examination (ACE)
- Record of School Achievement (RoSA)
- Special education
- Assessment Resource Centre (ARC)
- Schools Online
- Students Online.

Principles of effective assessment

Assessment is the broad name for the collection and evaluation of evidence of a student's learning. It is integral to teaching and learning and has multiple purposes. Assessment can enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly when it incorporates interaction with teachers, other students and a range of resources.

Teachers should consider the effect that assessment and feedback have on student motivation and self-esteem, and the importance of the active involvement of students in their own learning.

Assessment:

- provides opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about student achievement in relation to syllabus outcomes
- enables students to demonstrate what they know and can do
- clarifies student understanding of concepts and promotes deeper understanding
- provides evidence that current understanding and skills are a suitable basis for future learning.

Each assessment task should:

- be based on syllabus outcomes
- be a valid instrument for what they are designed to assess
- include criteria to clarify for students what aspects of learning are being assessed
- enable students to demonstrate their learning in a range of task types
- be reliable, measure what the task intends to assess, and provide accurate information on each student's achievement
- be free from bias and provide evidence that accurately represents a student's knowledge, understanding and skills
- enable students and teachers to use feedback effectively and reflect on the learning process
- be inclusive of and accessible for all students
- be part of an ongoing process where progress is monitored over time.

Stage 6 standards-referenced assessment

Standards-referenced assessment refers to the process of collecting and interpreting information about students' learning. It uses syllabus outcomes as key reference points for decisions about students' progress and achievement.

Syllabus outcomes:

- indicate the knowledge, understanding and skills expected to be acquired by students as a result of effective teaching and learning
- are derived from the syllabus objectives
- present a sequence of learning and take into account prior and subsequent learning of students.

Syllabus outcomes are used by teachers to:

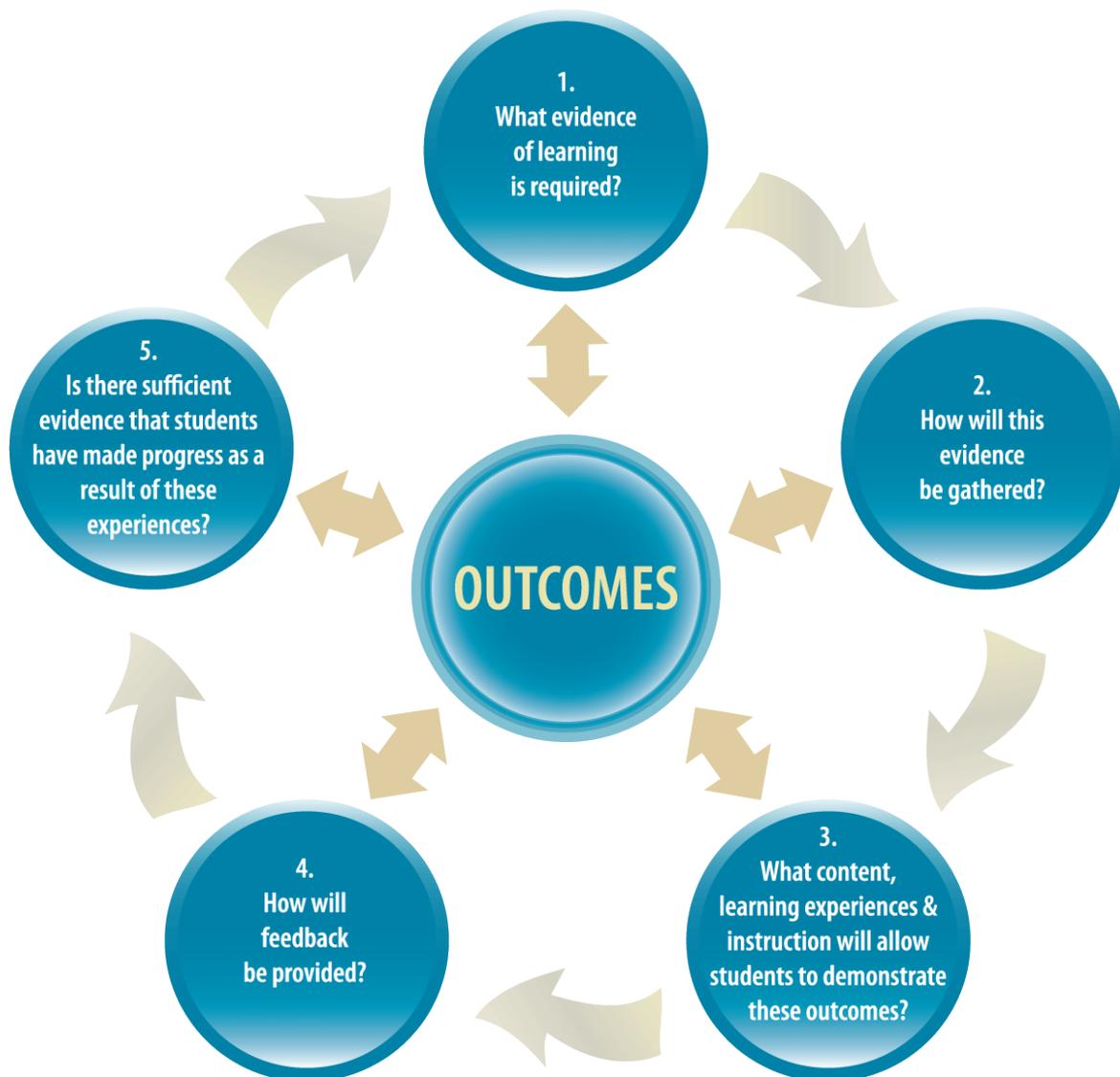
- plan and develop learning and assessment opportunities
- monitor student progress
- assess and measure student achievement against intended learning
- report student progress and achievement during, and at the end of each course.

Standards-referenced assessment	Standards describe
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• links the achievement of students to specified standards, through evidence collected from a number and variety of activities and from observations over time• involves teachers gathering evidence of student achievement formally and informally, to make judgements and to facilitate and monitor students' progress using syllabus outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• what students are expected to know, understand and do, described in syllabus outcomes, content and standards materials• how well students have achieved.

Using outcomes to develop assessment activities

The following model for developing assessment activities emphasises:

- that outcomes are central to the decisions teachers make about teaching, learning and assessment
- the importance of gathering evidence about student learning in relation to the outcomes
- how teachers use evidence to determine how well students are achieving in relation to the outcomes
- the importance of teacher feedback and student reflection
- how evidence of student achievement informs future teaching and learning.



Assessment for, Assessment as, Assessment of Learning

Assessment is an essential component of the teaching and learning cycle. Assessment for, assessment as and assessment of learning are approaches that enable teachers to gather evidence and make judgements about student achievement. These are not necessarily discrete approaches and may be used individually or together and formally or informally.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning involves teachers using evidence about students' knowledge, understanding and skills to inform their teaching. Sometimes referred to as 'formative assessment', it usually occurs throughout the teaching and learning process to clarify student learning and understanding.

Assessment for learning:

- reflects a view of learning in which assessment helps students learn better, rather than just achieve a better mark
- involves formal and informal assessment activities as part of learning and to inform the planning of future learning
- includes clear goals for the learning activity
- provides effective feedback that motivates the learner and can lead to improvement
- reflects a belief that all students can improve
- encourages self-assessment and peer assessment as part of the regular classroom routines
- involves teachers, students and parents reflecting on evidence
- is inclusive of all learners.

Assessment as Learning

Assessment as learning occurs when students are their own assessors. Students monitor their own learning, ask questions and use a range of strategies to decide what they know and can do, and how to use assessment information for new learning.

Assessment as learning:

- encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning
- requires students to ask questions about their learning
- involves teachers and students creating learning goals to encourage growth and development
- provides ways for students to use formal and informal feedback and self-assessment to help them understand the next steps in learning
- encourages peer assessment, self-assessment and reflection.

Assessment of Learning

Assessment of learning assists teachers in using evidence of student learning to assess achievement against outcomes and standards. Sometimes referred to as 'summative assessment', it usually occurs at defined key points during a teaching work or at the end of a unit, term or semester, and may be used to rank or grade students. The effectiveness of assessment of learning for grading or ranking purposes depends on the validity, reliability and weighting placed on any one task. Its effectiveness as an opportunity for learning depends on the nature and quality of the feedback.

Assessment of learning:

- is used to plan future learning goals and pathways for students
- provides evidence of achievement to the wider community, including parents, educators, the students themselves and outside groups
- provides a transparent interpretation across all audiences.

The approach or approaches used will be informed by:

- the evidence of student learning to be gathered
- the processes for gathering the evidence
- the feedback to be provided to students.

For example, a formal examination provides an opportunity to collect evidence of student learning and may be used for grading and ranking purposes (assessment of learning) as well as informing feedback for students to improve their learning (assessment for learning).

Adjustments for students with special education needs

It is a requirement under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* for schools to ensure that students with special education needs can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Some students with special education needs will require adjustments to assessment practices in order to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to syllabus outcomes and content.

These may include:

- adjustments to the assessment process. Some examples include additional time, rest breaks, the use of a reader and/or scribe or specific technology
- adjustments to assessment activities. Some examples include rephrasing questions, using simplified language or alternative formats for questions
- alternative formats for responses. Some examples include writing in point form instead of essays, scaffolded structured responses, short objective questions or multimedia presentations.

Schools are responsible for any decisions about adjustments to course work and formal school-based assessment tasks throughout Year 11 and Year 12. To access adjustments for the HSC examinations, an application for Disability Provisions must be submitted to NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). Providing adjustment does not restrict a student's access to the full range of grades or marks.

Examples of adjustments to assessment for students with special education needs can be found in course support materials. Additional advice is available on the NESA website.

Life Skills

Students undertaking Life Skills courses will study selected outcomes and content informed by a collaborative curriculum planning process. Assessment should provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to a range of situations or environments. Students undertaking Life Skills courses are not required to complete formal assessment tasks. Teachers are best able to determine the progress of the student.

Students may demonstrate achievement in relation to Life Skills outcomes independently, with adjustments or with support. The type of adjustments and support will vary according to the particular needs of the student and the requirements of the activity.

Additional Life Skills information about eligibility, programming, planning and assessment is available on the NESAs website.